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**Summary record of the 47th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 November 2000, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (A/55/12 and Add.1, A/55/472 and A/55/506-S/2000/1006)

1. **Mrs. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), reflecting on her 10 years at the head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that, despite the hopes roused by the end of the cold war, the situation had quickly become very complicated for the work of that Office, as evidenced by the mass exodus of Iraqi Kurds and the events in the Balkans and Central Africa. The international community had been slow to take action, as in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the Great Lakes region of Africa, and, confronted with such confusing notions as "humanitarian wars", the Office of the High Commissioner had had to explore new intervention strategies. In so doing, it had helped millions of refugees to return to their homes in such places as Mozambique, Indochina and Central America. The key lesson it had learned was that lasting solutions took time, effort and sustained international engagement.

2. Turning to the current challenges faced by her Office, she said that, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, refugees were returning home and tensions were subsiding. That trend could only last if resources were mobilized, in particular through the framework of the Stability Pact, to build houses and to create jobs. In Yugoslavia, where encouraging political changes had recently taken place, the Office must ensure the repatriation of half a million refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Croatia — focusing on freedom of movement, acceleration of property restitution and quick-impact interventions to facilitate returns. In Kosovo, while the return of 200,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians was as yet unfeasible, the Office must assist the Serb, Roma and other minorities living in that province.

3. In Rwanda, the reintegration activities of UNHCR were ending, but development actors were expected to step in. The Government must also, however, have the will to resolve the fundamental problems of power-sharing and democratization. In Burundi, the fighting had continued despite the resolute efforts of President Mandela. With the return of peace, UNHCR would be prepared to help with the repatriation of the more than half a million Burundian refugees living in the United Republic of Tanzania. In the Horn of Africa, where determined international efforts had produced a ceasefire, the Office had helped many refugees and displaced persons to return home. The signing of a peace agreement would permit UNHCR to take more decisive action.

4. In other regions, however, a combination of factors (rebel movements, weak conflict-resolution processes, and a lack of decisive international involvement) hampered the search for solutions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, little was done to alleviate the plight of peoples victimized by the conflict. In West Africa, the failure to implement the Lomé Agreement continued to prevent half a million Sierra Leonean refugees from returning home. Humanitarian efforts carried out in that region must be coupled with adequate security support. International backing for United Nations peacekeeping forces indeed appeared to be weakening, a trend which could well lead to a humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

5. In West Timor under harrowing conditions and in the face of harassment and intimidation from militias, UNHCR had extracted large numbers of refugees from the camps. The murder of three staff members had forced the Office to suspend its operations pending the disarming and disbandment of the militias and the arrest and prosecution of the killers.

6. Two and a half million Afghan refugees lived in exile, and that number was continually expanding as a result of renewed fighting and the intense drought that had stricken the country. Owing to funding constraints, the Office was scarcely able to meet their basic needs. In her discussions with the Taliban authorities, she had stressed the negative impact of some of their policies on the return of refugees, regarding, for example, the employment of women and the education of girls.

7. In Chechnya, where there were large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, the dangerous security conditions made the work of UNHCR very difficult. The Office would nonetheless continue to provide assistance to Chechen refugees in Ingushetia as well as to vulnerable groups within Chechnya.

8. There were numerous other cases in which solutions remained elusive: inter alia, the 400,000

Sudanese refugees scattered across several African nations; the half-million Sri Lankans displaced by the internal war; the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in Colombia; the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees still waiting in Nepal; and the 100,000 refugees living in the overcrowded camps along the border between Thailand and Myanmar.

9. With regard to prospects for the future, she said that there were a number of areas requiring reflection and concrete action.

10. First, the emergency preparedness and response capacity of UNHCR, which lay at the heart of all its activities, must continue to be strengthened. The emergency mechanisms established in 1992 had dramatically improved the operations of her Office. And yet the crisis in Kosovo had shown the need to revise those mechanisms in the light of the changing humanitarian environment.

11. Secondly, a secure environment must be created for refugee-populated areas and for humanitarian operations, so as to prevent tragic consequences in refugee camps, as had occurred, for instance, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and West Timor. Since 1997, she had been advocating the creation of a spectrum of options, including traditional peacekeeping on the one hand and a reliance on local capacities on the other. The objective of UNHCR was to operationalize "medium options" by, for example, deploying police or international civilian monitors to strengthen local law enforcement mechanisms. In that regard, the Office was contributing to the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the recommendations of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809). In addition to the matter of refugees and displaced persons, it was also necessary to ensure the safety of UNHCR staff, who often had to work in very dangerous areas. The support shown for the Office by Governments and the public should be translated into concrete political action and financial measures.

12. Third, new approaches to forced population movements must be developed, based on a reinforced international refugee-protection regime. There was an increasing tendency to confuse asylum-seekers fleeing human rights violations and people seeking better economic opportunities, resulting in the tendency of Governments to make it increasingly more difficult for asylum-seekers to find a home. The Office was launching global consultations with Governments, with a view to establishing an effective international protection regime. That initiative had been welcomed both by Governments and by the UNHCR Executive Committee.

13. Fourth, much more attention should be paid to the phase following conflicts. Scenes of misery and death sometimes seemed a prerequisite for donor interest; it was much more difficult to obtain the necessary resources for refugee returns, for example. Despite coordination efforts agreed among United Nations bodies at the request of Governments, the latter had not increased their political or financial support. Coexistence between divided communities should also be promoted in the aftermath of a conflict. To that end, her Office had launched a number of pilot projects under the title "Imagine coexistence" in Bosnia and Rwanda.

14. In order to meet such challenges, the Office should be managed and equipped for a faster, technologically advanced and globalized environment. Such modernization cost money. The Office's financial situation, however, was not encouraging; contributions in 2000 had not matched the budget approved by the Executive Committee. Cutbacks had therefore had to be made, with direct repercussions on some policy priorities, namely women, children and the environment. The lack of reliable funding had made long-term planning impossible, diminished the Office's credibility and strained relations with refugees, Governments and non-governmental organization partners. She stressed that the Office would be critically weakened if an urgent response to the funding situation was not forthcoming.

15. Her Office, which would mark its fiftieth anniversary in December 2000, unfortunately owed its longevity to the fact that persecution and conflict continued to exist. It was therefore appropriate to celebrate not the Office but rather the courage, determination and capacity for survival of refugees. On 14 December 2000, the independent Refugee Education Trust would be launched, with the aim of giving refugees in developing countries opportunities for post-primary education. She hoped that the initiative would be supported. She also hoped that the General Assembly would take up the recommendation to designate 20 June "World Refugee Day", to coincide with Africa Refugee Day.

16. She was grateful to the General Assembly for having shown confidence in her by entrusting her with profound responsibilities as High Commissioner. She also expressed gratitude to the staff of the Office for their support and their remarkable work. She was confident that the Office would benefit from the wealth of experience which her successor, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, would bring to his post.

17. **Mr. Knyazhinsky** (Russian Federation) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the Office's assistance to his country in dealing with refugees, for the privileged partnership that the Government had enjoyed with the Office and for the important role that the Office had played in implementing the results of the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States, held in Geneva in 1996. His delegation believed that the experience gained by the Office in some regions could be used to good effect in other regions and therefore wished to ask the High Commissioner what Governments, international organizations, donors and funding bodies should do, in her opinion, that might help settle the problems posed by migratory movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

18. **Ms. Hajjaji** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the 10 years during which the High Commissioner had carried out her functions had been characterized by so-called "humanitarian wars" and ethnic conflicts leading to massive refugee flows in various parts of the world, which had made the Office's task considerably more difficult.

19. UNHCR had sometimes been criticized for lacking impartiality, on the grounds that it had not applied the same rules to refugees and to persons displaced in their own countries. However, it tried to establish a balance among all the parties, to help all refugees and to protect the lives of the most vulnerable, by, for example, ensuring their safety in camps which were full of soldiers and weapons, even though its own staff had no means of defence and sometimes sacrificed their lives. Her delegation, while paying tribute to all donors who provided the Office with assistance, emphasized that such assistance should not depend on the ethnic origin, colour, religion or country of origin of the beneficiaries and that all refugees should be treated without discrimination, with the same humanitarian approach.

20. Her delegation would like to ask the High Commissioner which had been the gravest crises over the past 10 years, which problems had been the most complex and which had been the best solutions.

21. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea), having thanked the High Commissioner for the high quality of her report (A/55/12), asked what conclusions she had been able to draw from the 10 years that she had spent as High Commissioner.

22. His country, which over the past 10 years had received the largest number of refugees in Africa in relation to its population, continued to honour its international commitments and to respect the African tradition of hospitality. Refugees, for their part, however, must respect national laws and regulations in the interests of ensuring the security and stability of the receiving countries. It called again for receiving countries to be given greater assistance in their efforts.

23. After expressing warm thanks to the High Commissioner for her indefatigable activities on behalf of refugees, his delegation emphasized that her successor would enjoy its full cooperation.

24. **Mr. Čalovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the High Commissioner's opening statement showed her devotion to the cause of refugees. Noting that by the High Commissioner's own account the return of refugees in Eastern Europe was generally proceeding well, he requested her advice on the best course to follow in the future.

25. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her Government was fully committed to the cause of refugees and supported the global consultations that had been launched. Although they clearly did not aim to renegotiate the 1951 Convention, the consultations should, in her delegation's view, give close consideration to what it meant to be a refugee, in order to do away with all the ambiguities and controversies surrounding the status of refugees over the years. Her delegation also considered that there should not be discrepancies in the figures quoted for numbers of refugees and numbers of countries of refuge; the figure for Burundian refugees in Tanzania differed in the High Commissioner's introductory statement and in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/471). Yet the number

of refugees involved had to be taken into account when programmes and plans were set up.

26. **Mrs. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania deserved the warmest gratitude for giving refuge to a large number of refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia for a long period of time. It did not seem fair that some countries not only had to bear an extremely heavy economic and social burden for very long periods but also were subjected to deteriorating border security. She believed that the international community should take more action to relieve all countries which received refugees for extremely long periods. UNHCR would need to step up its efforts to encourage the international community to take a greater long-term interest in such situations and to seek solutions along with other United Nations partners.

27. With regard to the question raised by the United Republic of Tanzania, she said that the difference between the figures was due to the fact that the Office based its calculations on the number of people who had crossed the border into Tanzania after 1993 and for whom it provided assistance. Such assistance was not given to the large number of refugees who had arrived in Tanzania in 1972, unless they wished to be repatriated.

28. In reply to the Russian delegation, she noted that there had been extremely complicated population movements in the Russian Federation, which was why a conference had been held in Moscow in 1992 to try to regulate and stabilize the mass flows of people. There was much to learn from the policy that the Russian Federation was attempting to implement. Whether forced or spontaneous movements of peoples were concerned, specialists in legal and migration issues and humanitarian personnel were needed to manage migratory movements in the best way possible without detriment to the population. She did not, however, believe that there would be greater stability in the twenty-first century.

29. Responding to the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the High Commissioner said that despite all the difficulties — and even the failures — experienced, UNHCR had nevertheless succeeded in saving many lives. UNHCR staff always strived to be present in the field alongside the populations concerned, often exposing themselves to many dangers. No quick-fix solution existed; customs, mentalities and hatreds did not change overnight. It was her view that Governments should act more swiftly and implement preventive measures to prevent situations from degenerating into real conflict.

30. In conclusion, she said that although she had no intention of living the life of a recluse, she felt the need to take a break to review events.

31. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Angola) expressed concern at the disparity between the figures contained in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/55/12) and those contained in the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/55/471). There was also disparity in the figures for the refugees in Angola and the Angolan refugees in Zambia (paras. 46, 47 and 53 of the report of the Secretary-General and table 3 of the UNHCR report). Nor did the figures quoted for the total number of refugees receiving UNHCR assistance in Africa tally (para. 3 of the report of the Secretary-General and table 3 of the UNHCR report), and that could affect donor funding for refugees in Africa.

32. **Ms. Whyte** (Costa Rica) thanked Mrs. Ogata for her admirable service over the past decade and for the support she had lent to Costa Rica during the crisis in Central America when Costa Rica had received large refugee flows. It should be noted that Costa Rica today was similarly assisting refugees fleeing the armed conflict in Colombia. Her delegation was also grateful to the High Commissioner for referring in her report (A/55/12) to the efforts made by her country to integrate immigrants, legal or irregular, into Costa Rican society, through an amnesty programme benefiting more than 250,000 persons.

33. **Mr. Aguzzi-Durán** (Venezuela), after thanking the High Commissioner for all the work she had accomplished during the term of her mandate, drew her attention to paragraph 47 of the report (A/55/12) which required clarification. Between 1 January 1999 and 31 March 2000, there had been no influx of refugees from Colombia. On one occasion only, in 1999, the Venezuelan authorities had helped a group from Colombia to cross Venezuelan territory from one area in Colombian territory where they had felt themselves to be in danger to another area in Colombia where they had considered that they would be safer. For several decades now in Venezuela, there had been mass immigration from Colombia involving millions of immigrants, both legal and illegal. A large proportion

of the immigrants whose papers were in order had obtained permanent residence permits over the years. For the overwhelming majority, immigration was propelled by family and economic considerations. Migratory flows had begun to decrease once economic conditions in Venezuela had become less attractive. The Venezuelan delegation would not comment on events in Panama and in Ecuador, also mentioned in the report, but it vigorously denied the groundless assertion that Venezuela hosted in its territory "large populations of undocumented Colombians" who had "opted to remain anonymous for security reasons". Furthermore, Venezuela had never carried out mass expulsions of immigrants in an irregular situation, nor had it ever threatened to do so; illegal immigrant status had never meant that access to free education and health services provided by the Venezuelan State was denied to those concerned.

34. **Mr. Nteturuye** (Burundi) thanked Mrs. Ogata on behalf of his Government, the people of Burundi and refugees in particular for the tireless efforts she had expended since 1991. The dialogue she had held with all partners had been much appreciated by the Burundian authorities, by the authorities of the host countries and by the refugees themselves. Unfortunately, Mrs. Ogata was leaving her post at a time when Burundi was poised between a hoped-for peace and the reality of fierce war. The signature of the peace accord by 19 parties had in fact been immediately followed by a resurgence of violence and by the rebel movement's refusal to join in the peace process. Much therefore still remained to be done, and if Mrs. Ogata would agree to make a final visit to the Great Lakes region, the Government of Burundi would be extremely grateful. During such a visit, she could deliver a strong message to some of Burundi's neighbours, urging them to sincerely work for peace and for the return of the refugees, and to stop supplying arms to the rebel movements. She might also bring a message of thanks to Burundi's other neighbours who hosted refugees and who were sincerely supporting the peace process. Finally, the Government of Burundi was committed to close cooperation with the successor High Commissioner.

35. **Mr. El Aas** (Sudan), after thanking Mrs. Ogata for the admirable work she had accomplished and stressing his Government's willingness to cooperate with her successor, said that refugee movements were the by-product of political conflicts attributable to the big Powers. He hoped that in future, the international community and the United Nations in particular would make more sustained efforts for peace, particularly for conflict prevention. Echoing the concern expressed by the High Commissioner in her report (A/55/12), he lamented the scarce resources at the agency's disposal. He also deplored the fact that the allocation of those resources were increasingly dependent on political considerations connected with States' positions, whereas refugees should in fact enjoy equal access to humanitarian assistance regardless of their colour or origin. The United Nations should properly note and combat that tendency, in order to ensure that refugee assistance remained purely humanitarian.

36. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco) paid a tribute to Mrs. Ogata, requesting her advice and recommendations on the complex issue of refugees and UNHCR activities.

37. **Mrs. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the manner in which the Office of the High Commissioner distributed its aid to refugees was not influenced by political, religious or any other criteria. Its only criteria was need. Nevertheless, certain contributions were earmarked by donors for specific causes, which led to some refugees receiving more assistance than others. The Office of the High Commissioner urged donors not to earmark their contributions thus enabling the agency to utilize them equitably.

38. With regard to the apparent disparities between certain statistics, the High Commissioner would ask her colleagues to provide the clarifications requested. With regard to Angola, the problem was that some statistics included a certain number of displaced persons whom UNHCR did not necessarily assist. It was difficult to avoid discrepancies between statistics covering refugees as a whole and populations of concern to UNHCR and statistics which only took account of refugees in receipt of direct assistance from UNHCR. In any case, statistics should be viewed with caution since UNHCR was rarely in a position to make a thorough census of the populations concerned.

39. With regard to the observations made by the Venezuelan delegation concerning paragraph 47 of the report of the High Commissioner (A/55/12), she again proposed to ask her colleagues to make the necessary checks. As far as she was aware, there had indeed been some population outflow from Colombia recently,

which was a matter of concern to all neighbouring countries.

40. The situation in Burundi was a matter of great concern to her and she would be alerting her successor accordingly. She hoped that the progress achieved in respect of the peace accord would help the rebel movements to recognize that peace was an absolute prerequisite for ensuring the well-being of people. In the field, UNHCR was already prepared to receive the returnees and to contribute to their full reintegration in cooperation with the agency's partners and in the framework of a well-coordinated programme of reception.

41. **Mr. Prica** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that his delegation was grateful to Mrs. Ogata for everything she had done for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the terrible years both during and after the conflict. His Government welcomed the recent political change in Yugoslavia, which should contribute not only to the resolution of the overall situation but also to the resolution of the refugee situation. He trusted that UNHCR would help the Yugoslav Government to deal with the country's 500,000 or so refugees, many of whom came from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

42. The changes which had occurred in Croatia should also be welcomed, since they brightened the future prospects of the entire region. Lastly, the expected recovery of the Yugoslav economy would be beneficial for Bosnia and Herzegovina and would reduce practical obstacles to the return of refugees. The refugees would be more willing to return to their homes once they could be assured that political solutions had been implemented.

43. **Mr. Musenga** (Rwanda) thanked UNHCR for its assistance to the people of Rwanda, particularly during the critical period following the genocide. The Office of the High Commissioner had helped the Rwandan Government to repatriate more than 3 million refugees at a time when the Rwandan people were being held hostage by *interahamwe* militia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and appeals to the international community for help had fallen on deaf ears. Rwanda was eventually able to resolve the problem on its own by dismantling the camps. Mrs. Ogata had visited Rwanda on several occasions, and his delegation hoped that she would pay another visit to Rwanda before her mandate expired.

44. With regard to the reference in the High Commissioner's opening statement to democratization and inadequate power-sharing in Rwanda, he pointed out that the Government had agreed to share power since 1994 after the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement, and that Rwanda had since begun to implement democratization measures and that process was currently under way. In conclusion, the Government of Rwanda welcomed the UNHCR initiative to launch a pilot project entitled, "Imagine coexistence", which were actually a mechanism for reconciliation.

45. **Mr. Campuzano** (Mexico) congratulated Mrs. Ogata on the exceptional manner in which she had fulfilled her mandate and underscored the close cooperation his country had enjoyed with UNHCR for more than 10 years in relation to the situation of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. He recalled the High Commissioner's visit to Santo Domingo in the State of Campeche, when she attended the ceremony marking the closure of the programme of assistance and voluntary repatriation of Guatemalan refugees. On that occasion, the President of Mexico had reaffirmed his Government's commitment and respect for international law, the protection of human rights, and its traditional policy in favour of the right to asylum and refugees.

46. **Mr. Rezvani** (Islamic Republic of Iran), after praising the tireless efforts made by Mrs. Ogata on behalf of refugees over the previous 10 years, referred to the High Commissioner's mention of the 2.5 million Afghan refugees. The High Commissioner's remarks had been confined to deploring the plight of those refugees and the drought which was making their repatriation to Afghanistan even more difficult. His delegation therefore wished to know what recommendations the High Commissioner might have for putting and end to a self-perpetuating situation.

47. In her remarks, the High Commissioner had not mentioned the neighbouring countries which had for a long time borne the burden of hosting Afghan refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran had received the largest number of refugees over the longest period. The presence of refugees in Iran, for over 20 years, had led to a number of difficulties, not to mention the amounts invested in social, health, educational and other services being provided them.

48. Moreover, the Iranian delegation endorsed the appeal launched by the High Commissioner for the international community to allocate additional financial, political and human resources for the purpose of establishing conditions in Afghanistan conducive to the repatriation of Afghan refugees in dignity. To that end, the international community should redouble its efforts to persuade the leaders of Afghanistan to strive for national reconciliation, the only way to rebuild the peace and security which was essential to the return of the refugees.

49. **Ms. Oléa** (Congo) thanked the High Commissioner for the assistance provided to the Republic of the Congo. She noted with regret that political crises affecting a number of States, particularly in Africa, had led to waves of refugees living under extremely precarious conditions, as in the case of northern Congo, where refugees had fled fighting which had erupted in the Equator province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her Government wished to reiterate its willingness to assist and protect those people, and would endeavour to strengthen its links with its neighbours. She appealed to the international community to devote its energies to resolving the problems of the region and to render assistance both to the populations at risk and the host countries. In conclusion, the Congolese delegation encouraged Mrs. Ogata's successor to place greater emphasis on disaster prevention and management.

50. **Ms. Raquiz** (Croatia) stressed that, in the light of recent events in Croatia and the region, her delegation welcomed the comments made by the High Commissioner in her opening remarks on the positive role expected of the new players in the region, and on the need to increase the resources available to the Stability Pact. The Croatian delegation asked Mrs. Ogata how she perceived the role of UNHCR acting in parallel with the Stability Pact, given reduced humanitarian operations in the region.

51. **Mrs. Ogata** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) replied that recent changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had changed the nature of the issues of concern to UNHCR, particularly with regard to the possible return to their respective countries of Croatian Serbs, Bosnian Serb refugees in Serbia, as well as the return of approximately 600,000 persons displaced from Kosovo who had sought refuge in Serbia. Returns to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had already begun, but the most problematic situation prevailed in Kosovo. Some displaced persons from Kosovo would return to their homes, and she firmly believed that it would be possible to reintegrate the rest into Serbia, a process which UNHCR could assist, particularly if the country's economic situation were to improve.

52. As regards Rwanda, UNHCR was doing its utmost to contribute not only to the process of repatriating refugees, but also to the enormous project of building shelters at a time when scarcely enough funds were being earmarked for development. UNHCR also tried to place emphasis on reconciliation and community projects.

53. Turning to the situation in Mexico, she said the Government had set an example by giving Guatemalan refugees the choice between voluntary repatriation or acquiring Mexican nationality. It was hoped that the Mexican example would inspire other countries in a similar position.

54. In the case of Iran, which was host to more than a million Afghan refugees, the High Commissioner referred to a project launched in 2000 which had been sponsored jointly by the Government of Iran and UNHCR. The project offered a small grant to refugees who volunteered to be repatriated to Afghanistan, a solution chosen by many refugees. The other solution it proposed to the Afghans seeking refugee status was for them to explain to a mixed commission comprising representatives of UNHCR and the Government of Iran, the reasons why they feared returning to Afghanistan based on their past experience. It had been established that almost one third of the asylum seekers needed protection and should be allowed to remain in Iran. That procedure might help to reduce the tremendous burden borne by Pakistan and Iran. However, such a solution would ultimately depend on the attention paid to the whole problem of Afghanistan.

55. UNHCR was extremely concerned by the situation in the Republic of Congo where there were said to be up to 100,000 new refugees who were hard to reach. UNHCR was trying to rally the support of the international community, and Mrs. Ogata said that she fully endorsed the appeal launched by the Government.

56. She welcomed the changes in Croatia and the fact that refugees had begun to return, with the assistance of UNHCR, which was also engaged in drawing attention to the need for material assistance. In collaboration with the Croatian Government, UNHCR had proposed

projects which could be financed within the framework of the Stability Pact.

**Agenda item 107: Advancement of women** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.16/Rev.1 and A/C.3/55/L.33)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.16/Rev.1: The critical situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women*

57. **The Chairperson** said that the programme budgetary implications of draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.16/Rev.1 were contained in document A/C.3/55/L.33.

58. **Ms. Ukaeje** (Nigeria) said that Austria, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had become sponsors of the draft resolution, and she expressed the hope that the text would be adopted by consensus.

59. **Mr. Rabby** (United States of America) said that his delegation, regretfully was not joining the consensus on the draft resolution because paragraph 6 stated that financial assistance would be provided to the Institute "in a fashion to be determined", perhaps meaning through an appropriation from the regular budget, which was contrary to article VII of the Statute of the Institute. Moreover, rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly stipulated that no resolution involving expenditure could be recommended for approval by the General Assembly unless it was accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General, which was not included in draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.33 and would not be known until the draft was submitted subsequently to the Fifth Committee. Lastly, his delegation wished to emphasize that the situation of the Institute would be less precarious if it received the $188,551 pledged in contributions that remained outstanding.

60. *Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.16/Rev.1 was adopted.*

61. **The Chairperson** suggested that the Committee should recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/55/271).

62. *It was so decided.*

63. **The Chairperson** announced that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 107.

**Agenda item 113: Right of peoples to self-determination** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.32)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.32: The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination*

64. **The Chairperson** said that draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.32 had no programme budget implications. She recalled that Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Japan, Liechtenstein and Norway had been announced as sponsors when the draft resolution had been introduced, and that Saint Lucia had been included in the original list of sponsors in error.

65. **Mr. Bebars** (Egypt) said that Angola, Argentina, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iceland, India, Saint Lucia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey had become sponsors since the draft resolution had been introduced. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

66. **Ms. Elliott** (Guyana) and **Mr. Manyokole** (Lesotho) announced that their delegations also wished to sponsor the draft resolution.

67. **The Chairperson** announced that a recorded vote had been requested on the draft resolution and recalled that, in accordance with rule 128 of the rules of procedure, the proposer of a proposal or of an amendment was not permitted to explain his or her vote on his or her own proposal or amendment.

68. **Mr. Sultan** (Israel), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that his country supported the right of all peoples to self-determination, including in the Middle East, as had been demonstrated by the Camp David Agreement, more than 20 years earlier, and the Oslo process, by which Israel had recognized the legitimate rights and just demands of the Palestinian people, but the draft resolution prejudged the outcome of the permanent-status negotiations. Israel hoped, however, that the violence would quickly be brought to an end and that the peace process would resume very shortly.

69. *A recorded vote was taken on the draft resolution.*

*In favour:*

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria,

Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

*Against:*

Israel, United States of America.

*Abstaining:*

Canada, Marshall Islands, Tonga.

70. *Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.32 was adopted by 147 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions.*

71. **Ms. Wensley** (Australia) said that, while her delegation had voted for the draft resolution as a whole, which appeared to be a clear reaffirmation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, had the Committee voted paragraph by paragraph, her delegation would have abstained in the voting on paragraph 1, because it considered that the right of the Palestinian people to a State should be the subject of an agreed solution between the parties on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Oslo Agreements and the "land for peace" principle.

72. **Mr. Hynes** (Canada) said that his delegation had abstained in the voting because it considered that the establishment of a Palestinian State must be the outcome of negotiations between the parties concerned.

73. **Mr. Rogov** (Russian Federation) said that his country would spare no effort to bring the parties to a compromise and to put an end to the violence. It was vital that the negotiations between the two parties should resume and that both sides should demonstrate restraint and cease all provocation.

74. **Ms. Contamin** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the European Union wished to affirm, as it had at the European Council meeting held in Berlin on 25 March 1999 and in its statement issued in New York on 12 September 2000, the unconditional right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its right to build a sovereign State. The establishment of a sovereign, democratic and viable State, on the basis of the existing agreements and the negotiations, would be the best guarantee of security for Israel. The European Union called on Israel and the Palestinians to find an agreed solution to the conflict, without prejudice to the right to self-determination, which could not be the subject of a veto.

75. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) thanked the representative of Egypt for introducing the draft resolution, which was of critical importance, since it was sponsored by 91 States and provided strong support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the creation of their own State. She regretted that the United States had voted against the draft resolution and criticized the attitude of Israel, which could not both recognize as legitimate the demands of the Palestinian people and at the same time deny them the right to self-determination, an inalienable right that transcended any agreement.

76. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 113.

**Agenda item 114 (a): Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.29 and L.30)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.29 entitled "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families"*

77. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.29 had no programme budget implications and recalled that, at the time of its introduction, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka had been the sponsors of the draft resolution. She wished to announce that Haiti, Kenya and Paraguay had since joined the list of sponsors.

78. **Ms. Monroy** (Mexico) said that Azerbaijan, Ghana, Honduras, Portugal, Tunisia and Turkey had also joined the list of sponsors and she hoped that the draft text could be adopted by consensus.

79. *Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.29 was adopted without a vote.*

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.30, entitled "Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"*

80. **Ms. Newell** (Secretary of the Committee) read a statement by the Controller in which, with reference to paragraph 26 of draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.30, he drew the Committee's attention to the provisions of section VI of resolution 45/248 B, in which the General Assembly reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters; reaffirmed also the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; expressed its concern at the tendency of its substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters; and invited the Secretary-General to provide all intergovernmental bodies with the required information regarding procedures for administrative and budgetary matters. The Controller and his team were willing to provide members of the Committee with all the information they might wish on the matter.

81. **The Chairman** recalled that, at the time of its introduction, Australia, El Salvador, Georgia, Hungary, Uganda and Ukraine had been the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.30 and announced that Colombia also wished to join the list of sponsors.

82. **Mr. Joergensen** (Denmark) announced that Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malta, Poland and Sierra Leone had joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

83. *Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.30 was adopted without a vote.*

84. **Ms. Haj-Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her delegation had not wanted to place any obstacle in the way of a consensus, but wished to make it clear nevertheless that it could not accept operative paragraph 18 of the text, which suggested that the Special Rapporteur was competent to discharge functions for which he had no mandate.

85. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 114 (a).

*The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.3/55/SR.48

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
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Original: English

## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 48th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 November 2000 at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Alaei (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

## Contents

Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*)

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*In the absence of Ms. Gittens-Joseph (Trinidad and Tobago), Mr. Alaei (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (*continued*) (A/55/12 and Add.1, A/55/471, A/55/472 and A/55/506-S/2000/1006)

1. **Mr. Levitte** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, paid tribute to the outstanding work of Ms. Ogata, the outgoing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and welcomed the appointment of Mr. Lubbers, her successor as a tribute to Europe's commitment to refugee issues. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary at a moment when the context for its activities had changed greatly. The millennium theme of the Executive Committee, "UNHCR @ 50: from response to solutions" had allowed for review of past actions and the time had come to build on those experiences and find new approaches to resolve current problems, for example through the promotion of coexistence.

2. New types of conflict had developed in which civilian populations were not only targets but also strategic pawns, a situation that contributed to forced displacements and exposed humanitarian personnel to violence. The European Union welcomed the fact that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) criminalized attacks against humanitarian personnel. It supported the elaboration of a protocol to the 1994 Convention on the safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel with a view to extending its protection to all persons involved in humanitarian operations, and looked forward to a report of the Secretary-General on the conditions and criteria for the involvement of humanitarian personnel in high-risk operations. The humanitarian community as a whole must address the issue of safety and the question of what measures — such as special training and use of the latest communication technology — should be adopted. The safety of humanitarian personnel and integrated conflict-prevention and peace-consolidation strategies should be important elements in the follow-up to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report — A/55/305-S/2000/809). The European Union also advocated the study of medium-term alternatives such as the use of civilian monitors or an international police force.

3. Situations where humanitarian assistance had not been possible owing to safety concerns were especially troubling, and he stressed the obligation of all parties in armed conflicts, including internal conflicts in particular States, to respect international humanitarian law, protect civilian populations, guarantee the safety of humanitarian personnel and allow free access to those requiring assistance. They must also — if necessary with the assistance of the international community — ensure that there were no armed groups in the refugee camps and that the location of those camps did not increase their vulnerability. He recalled in particular States' obligation to allow humanitarian assistance to reach internally displaced persons, and welcomed United Nations efforts to make assistance to displaced persons more effective such as, implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which stressed an inter-institution approach and the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Humanitarian action could not, however, replace political will, nor should it be used as an element of some political strategy. It must be impartial and meet the needs of all refugees in order to ensure that their sheer numbers did not become too heavy a burden or a new source of disruption.

4. It was essential for UNHCR to be guaranteed adequate and reliable financing, and he welcomed its recent budget reforms and urged it to continue to fulfil its mandate in the most effective manner possible. As the major contributor to UNHCR, the European Union called for increased effort and cooperation in order to meet UNHCR's needs and also welcomed the latter's initiatives to seek new funding sources, in particular in the private sector. New partnerships should also be formed in the areas of communications and information technology.

5. Respect for fundamental rights was essential for the prevention of crises which led to forced displacements of populations as well as for a return to peace and stability, and he noted UNHCR's comprehensive and collaborative approach to humanitarian situations, which stressed human rights. Children's rights in particular required special

vigilance, and he welcomed recent progress such as the adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Increased emphasis on the rights of women refugees was also welcome, since women could play a decisive role in organizing life in the camps and promoting reconciliation.

6. Given the variety of situations in which UNHCR was required to operate the European Union, welcomed efforts to strengthen emergency-response capacity and to further develop its analytical capacities. Restructuring and modernization should yield rapid results, and the European Union was confident that decentralization measures would not leave headquarters out of touch with the situation in the field or affect the dialogue with donor countries, which must be kept informed in order to maintain their level of commitment.

7. Although there had been a slight increase in the number of refugees, in particular as a result of unresolved conflicts in various regions of Africa, and although poor weather conditions in Africa and Asia had worsened the situation of many refugees and displaced persons, more than 1.6 million refugees had returned home in 1999. Voluntary repatriation was the best of the sustainable solutions but was only possible with adequate guarantees of safety and dignity. Humanitarian agencies should therefore adopt a more strategic approach and make proposals for better-defined solutions which linked emergency relief and development, which would increase donations. UNHCR should also continue to build on the results of the round-table discussions held during the Executive Committee meetings.

8. With regard to the consultations on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, he noted the difficulty of distinguishing between asylum-seekers and migrants and expressed concern that a growing number of countries were raising obstacles to asylum-seekers and weakening their asylum regimes. The European Union would be a ready participant in those consultations, which should stress the relevance of fundamental principles of protection and confirm the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol as cornerstones of the asylum process.

9. The development of regional asylum strategies would increase the quality of asylum and, to that end, the European Union had developed a policy based on full implementation of the 1951 Convention and, in keeping with the spirit of the European Council meeting in Tampere, Finland, its member States were harmonizing their asylum policy and studying many of the same issues being addressed by UNHCR. For example, it was working to define standards for protection in cases of massive sudden influxes of refugees as a result of serious crises and was discussing standardization of measures relating to asylum-seekers. Current disparities had been shown to affect the destination chosen by asylum-seekers and also caused secondary movements. A European fund for refugees had been created to finance measures to ensure integration or voluntary repatriation of asylum-seekers and provide assistance for emergency measures in cases of sudden influxes of refugees.

10. The past 10 years had been decisive for UNHCR, during which its budget and staff had doubled, and it had become an essential actor in refugee and asylum matters. Under the High Commissioner's leadership, UNHCR, had become an instrument capable of adapting to the changing international situation and was continuing the process of modernizing its operations.

11. **Ms. Taft** (United States of America) paid tribute to Ms. Sadako Ogata, the outgoing High Commissioner, for her able leadership of UNHCR through the crises in Northern Iraq, the Balkans, Rwanda, Timor and elsewhere. The agency had been called upon to assume unprecedented responsibilities over the past decade. Her delegation saluted Ms. Ogata for speaking up in behalf of peace and reconciliation and for daring to challenge those who had sown conflict, who continued to hamper the return of their own citizens or who abused the human rights of refugees. Ms. Ogata had also tackled the issue of internally displaced persons, which was of particular concern to the United States Government.

12. On the issue of security, Ms. Ogata should be commended for taking the initiative of hiring special guards in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and negotiating her own special arrangements with the Tanzanian authorities.

13. Under Ms. Ogata's leadership, UNHCR had galvanized the international community to respond to the humanitarian imperatives of the day. However, the agency was not an independent actor. Member States

must collectively ensure that UNHCR fulfilled its mandate and made efficient use of its resources. It was also the obligation of all stakeholders to ensure that the agency was adequately funded, so that refugees received the care and protection they deserved. UNHCR could not be held accountable if donors did not improve their generosity; the United States, for its part, had pledged more than $235 million in 2000.

14. The core principles of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees remained valid, but in view of the complex flows of people in today's world, certain lacunae needed to be examined. UNHCR must also strengthen its overall emergency preparedness, including the development of a "surge capacity" to ensure rapid deployment in emergencies. It was also imperative to ensure that all refugees were properly registered. Most importantly perhaps, the security of both refugees and humanitarian personnel must be further addressed, given that the latter had become the unacceptable targets of conflicting parties seeking to politicize or disrupt humanitarian assistance. The recent loss of four UNHCR staff members in West Timor and in Guinea was a further reminder that States were responsible for safeguarding the physical security of humanitarian personnel. States must also bring to justice those responsible for the attacks.

15. Although Ms. Ogata had acted as a catalyst for the "Brookings process" (A/55/12, para. 4), UNHCR could not be expected to tackle on its own the issue of the transition from relief to development. The Committee should thus consider ways of ensuring that development actors were involved in the earliest stages of an emergency. The considerable contribution of developing countries acting as refugee host countries was also insufficiently recognized. It was high time the international community identified ways of helping them to ease the transition from relief to development.

16. Her delegation remained concerned about the protection of the most vulnerable groups among refugees, particularly women and children. Especially when forced to flee from their homes without their husbands and fathers, they were all too often the victims of physical violence and sexual abuse. His delegation welcomed the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1325 (2000), which recommended that women in war zones should receive special treatment as victims of conflict and should be involved in peace negotiations.

17. Her Government warmly welcomed the choice of Mr. Ruud Lubbers, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, as the new High Commissioner.

18. **Mr. Al-Aas** (Sudan) recalled that the Sudan's geographical position had made it a safe haven for refugees for over 30 years. The Sudan continued to pay the economic, social and environmental costs of large influxes of refugees, including the recent arrival of some 100,000 Eritrean refugees fleeing hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

19. The visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the Sudan had helped draw attention to the work being done by the international community, and particularly UNHCR, to alleviate the suffering of refugees seeking protection in that country. The Sudan very much hoped that international support would continue in order to facilitate the voluntary and safe return of all refugees. The Government was grateful for the High Commissioner's visit and for her able guidance of UNHCR over the past decade.

20. The killing and deliberate targeting of United Nations humanitarian personnel was deplorable. His Government extended its heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and urged all sides to guarantee the safety of all United Nations personnel working in the field.

21. Despite the myriad refugee problems which the Sudan faced, international resources for its refugee programmes had steadily declined. UNHCR had adopted a policy of gradual withdrawal from the country, reducing the amount of assistance offered to Eritrean refugees of long standing and thereby causing them considerable legal and humanitarian problems. Such measures should not be taken without involving the parties concerned, particularly since the Sudan had signed on 7 April 2000, a Tripartite Agreement with Eritrea and UNHCR (A/55/471, para. 4) which had raised hopes for the return of the Eritrean refugees.

22. The Sudan's environment and infrastructure had been devastated by the influx of refugees over a period of 30 years. The Government once more urged the international community to provide adequate compensation in order to facilitate the reclamation of the affected areas.

23. Just as the Sudan was always willing to offer refugees protection, security and assistance in its own

territory, it hoped that its nationals would enjoy similar or better treatment in neighbouring States, in accordance with commitments made pursuant to the relevant international instruments.

24. In that regard, the Sudan condemned the enlistment in refugee camps of child refugees used in armed conflict. The Sudan also sought permission to carry out visits to Sudanese refugees in neighbouring States in order to inform them about the situation in their home country and provide them with information which could facilitate their voluntary return.

25. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Ministerial Meeting on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Africa, held in Khartoum in 1998, (ibid, para. 72) had made a number of recommendations pertaining to the situation in Africa embodied in the Khartoum Declaration. UNHCR and the international community should play their part in supporting the implementation of those recommendations.

26. **Mr. Naess** (Norway) said that, for as long as the problem of people being forced to flee their homes persisted, the importance of UNHCR's work would remain undiminished.

27. UNHCR had been fortunate to have had a truly outstanding High Commissioner at its helm over a 10 year period in which the Office had faced some of the most pressing humanitarian emergencies of modern times. UNHCR had earned itself an excellent reputation, based on the commitment, courage and professionalism of its personnel. His Government saluted the achievements of the High Commissioner and her office in maintaining a delicate balance between the humanitarian imperative and the challenges of lack of access and security while at the same time providing protection and relief to those in need.

28. Over the years, various unmet protection needs had been identified, requiring new instruments and complementary forms of protection. The upcoming consultations on international protection would provide an opportunity to address those issues and ensure better implementation of protection instruments.

29. Humanitarian assistance should be accompanied by political and confidence-building measures. UNHCR interventions had contributed to conflict prevention, reconciliation, peace-building and reconstruction. The agency would remain an indispensable partner for peace-building.

30. Norway supported the "ladder of options" concept, mentioned by the High Commissioner in her 1998 report (A/54/12, para. 175) as a way of dealing with the issue of security in refugee camps and their surrounding areas. It was encouraging that the concept had been placed on the agenda for United Nations inter-agency follow-up to the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809).

31. It was tragic that humanitarian workers, including UNHCR staff, had sometimes been targeted in the field. Measures for enhanced protection of relief workers should be further strengthened both from within the inter-agency system and by Member States. The security of humanitarian workers and the thresholds or risk and responsibilities should be placed on the agenda of an inter-agency review.

32. UNHCR's achievements would not have been possible without the help of non-governmental organizations, the United Nations family and the Bretton Woods institutions. However, the international system was still too poorly equipped to tackle the transition from emergency relief to long-term development. Norway encouraged UNHCR to continue to bridge the gap between the humanitarian and development communities.

33. The tasks of UNHCR were diverse and complex and could only succeed with the requisite political and financial support. Norway would continue to do its part in that regard.

34. Many developing countries took on a heavy burden by accepting large numbers of refugees, often for long periods. The international community should attach greater value to the contribution made by such countries.

35. Norway very much welcomed the appointment of Mr. Lubbers to succeed Ms. Ogata as High Commissioner and was confident that his personal and professional qualities would greatly benefit UNHCR and the persons under its care.

36. **Mr. Dos Santos** (Mozambique), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), paid tribute to Ms. Ogata's tireless work and visionary leadership over the past decade. She had contributed, inter alia, to strengthening the agency's relations with the Security

Council and had helped the latter to better appreciate the link between political and humanitarian concerns. The SADC region was proud to have contributed to two of the most outstanding successes of the "Ogata era": the return and reintegration of Mozambican refugees and the repatriation of exiled South Africans following the dismantling of apartheid. SADC also pledged its full support to Mr. Lubbers, the incoming High Commissioner for Refugees.

37. At a time when UNHCR was marking 50 years of its existence and seeking to move from response to solutions, it was disconcerting to note that the number of people of concern was increasing, and that women and children made up the majority. SADC was, however, gratified to note that UNHCR was promoting gender-sensitive asylum procedures in countries of asylum.

38. SADC also wished to reiterate the appeal of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the international community to provide adequate assistance to refugees in Africa, in the spirit of international solidarity and burden sharing. SADC also urged that resources should be equitably allocated in all regions of the world.

39. SADC hoped that the undertakings given by Heads of State at the Millennium Summit in respect of international cooperation and burden sharing would be translated into action as the new century unfolded. It was in that context that SADC welcomed the establishment of a UNHCR/OAU task force to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the Khartoum Declaration adopted by the 1998 OAU Ministerial Meeting on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Africa. SADC also welcomed the Global Implementation Plan adopted by the recent OAU/UNHCR Special Meeting of Governments and Non-Government Technical Experts organized in Conakry, Guinea on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the OAU Refugee Convention.

40. SADC supported the adoption by the international community of broader, regionally based peace-building approaches to assist regions and countries emerging from the spiral of conflict, poverty and human displacement, with a view to addressing the problem of refugees and its far-reaching effects. To that end, SADC appreciated the decision by UNHCR to review its role in respect of internally displaced persons, and to adopt a policy of preparedness to respond to the calls by the international community to assist groups of internally displaced persons.

41. SADC also appealed to the United Nations to avoid delays in providing assistance to African countries in need, in order to minimize violations of peace accords as well as a resumption of conflicts, which all too often resulted in further waves of refugees.

42. The open debate on refugees held by the Security Council in January had been most welcome. It was to be hoped that the synergies being built would be further enhanced. SADC would also cooperate fully with the initiative launched by UNHCR to commence global consultations with States, with the involvement of refugee experts, non-governmental organizations and refugees, aimed at revitalizing the international protection regime.

43. **Mr. Satoh** (Japan) said that his Government would continue to extend strong support for and cooperation with Mr. Lubbers, the incoming High Commissioner. Ms. Ogata had succeeded in championing the cause of human security throughout the decade of post-cold-war disorder, which had seen vast numbers of people forced to leave their homes, communities or countries as a result of conflicts and other predicaments.

44. The refugee issue was not new, but it was compounded by the complexity of the situation in the countries and regions involved, with communities often divided by religious and ethnic hatreds, governance and public security lacking, and poverty widespread. The challenges faced by Ms. Ogata and her staff had thus been unprecedented. UNHCR had often been forced to address such problems single-handedly in the field.

45. There was, indeed, a need for greater cooperation among the organizations concerned with refugees and displaced persons. The serious "gap" often mentioned by the High Commissioner between relief efforts and development activities must be addressed in order to maximize their effectiveness. Although greater cooperation among refugee organizations was now taking place under her leadership, such efforts remained inadequate. All actors — particularly UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank — should thus redouble their efforts to achieve better coordination, activities,

particularly in the field. Japan, for its part, was prepared to participate in such efforts.

46. His delegation also wished to reiterate the importance of more focused efforts to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel. In that context, the General Assembly should follow the Secretary-General's recommendation to pursue the development of a protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. Japan, for its part, would provide a further $ 1 million to support United Nations training programmes aimed at enhancing the security of field personnel. It hoped that other countries would also join in that effort.

47. Japan accorded the highest priority to the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons globally and remained firmly committed to UNCHR.

48. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the wealth of information contained in the High Commissioner's report (A/55/12) would be helpful for the work carried out by the Catholic Church through its various relief agencies. In June 2000, the Vatican had issued its own Jubilee Charter of Rights of Displaced People.

49. The work of the United Nations in providing assistance to refugees and displaced persons had been consistently successful and deserving of praise. The return, resettlement and reintegration of refugee populations were commendable parts of the High Commissioner's work. The Holy See extended its best wishes and gratitude to the High Commissioner for her years of dedicated service, and offered its support and congratulations to her successor.

50. Unfortunately, refugee problems continued unabated in the modern world. According to the High Commissioner's report (para. 1), the global population of concern to UNHCR had increased by about 800,000 persons in 1999 to reach a total of 22.3 million, of whom 11.6 million were refugees and 4.08 million internally displaced persons (ibid, table 3). Between 50 and 70 per cent of refugees were children, some having lived their entire lives in refugee camps. As the most vulnerable group, children needed special protection to guarantee their rights and provide them with hope for the future.

51. Poor countries often bore the heaviest refugee burden and in many countries the quality of protection and shelter had declined. More international solidarity was needed, particularly from wealthier nations which accepted only a small part of the burden. Without tangible support, humanitarian crises would continue into the future.

52. As the report had indicated (para. 12), the protection by States of the fundamental rights of all people subject to their jurisdiction was the key to changing the situation of refugees and displaced persons. The Holy See continued to call for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for human dignity. It was convinced that the protection of human rights should never be subordinated to economic and political interests.

53. The Holy See advocated the development of a clearer system of responsibility for internally displaced persons, and welcomed the preparatory work for the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, hoping that the event would enhance awareness of cultural diversity and of the need never to use race, culture, religion, language or ethnic origin to force people from their homes.

54. A staggering number of people were seeking refuge from war or persecution, and the provision of assistance was becoming an increasingly complex challenge. At the same time, the international system of protection was being eroded and new barriers to asylum were being erected. Protection and security should be seen as the most important part of UNHCR's work, especially when other international and local agencies depended on United Nations protection to be able to provide humanitarian assistance.

55. The Holy See welcomed the special attention given in the report (ibid, para. 21) to family protection issues and to the role of the family in assuring the well-being of its members. Reintegration in the homeland or integration in a new country was indeed best effected through the family unit.

56. The Holy See would continue to support UNHCR in its work and would pray for the day when the High Commissioner's report would contain nothing but good news.

57. **Mr. Amoros Nuñez** (Cuba) stressed the important role played by UNHCR in meeting the needs of refugees and noted the role played by Cuban doctors in providing health services to refugees through UNHCR, thereby reducing the burden on local health

services, in keeping with Cuba's traditional support for UNHCR. Cuba had also received many refugees and every effort had been made to integrate them into Cuban society, in spite of the fact that Cuba was a developing country and still suffered from the effects of the United States economic embargo. The only exceptions to that practice had been situations where the sheer number of refugees had forced the authorities to request the assistance of UNHCR in sharing the burden.

58. Given the rising numbers of person requiring assistance, he expressed concern at the recent downward trend in the UNHCR budget. He also deplored the fact that, whereas resources had been found for high-profile emergency situations in Kosovo, East Timor and the northern Caucasus, the General and Special Programmes budget, particularly with regard to Africa, where the need was just as great, had been reduced.

59. The total number of refugees had increased, and the causes of the refugee crisis could not be limited to political and human-rights issues but were to a large extent the result of violence, poverty, economic inequality and lack of resources. In the light of the need for voluntary repatriation of the refugees or their integration in the host country, it was more urgent than ever to provide greater resources and support for the efforts of developing countries with large refugee populations.

60. Although there had recently been unprecedented efforts to strengthen assistance programmes for internally displaced persons, those efforts had been undertaken with little consultation with Governments, including many of the countries affected. The development of guidelines or principles for the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance to such persons must be discussed and approved by Member States. Failure to do so would increase the suffering of that population.

61. Full respect for the principles of international humanitarian law was a fundamental aspect of UNHCR activities. His Government would continue to cooperate with that agency to provide assistance in refugee camps and areas of massive influxes of refugees, which should also be a priority for the entire international community.

*The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.3/55/SR.49

# General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 49th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 November 2000, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)
*Later*: Ms. de Wet (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Namibia)

## Contents

Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (*continued*) (A/55/12 and Add.1, A/55/471, A/55/472 and A/55/506-S/2000/1006)

1. **Ms. Mitry** (Egypt) paid tribute to Ms. Ogata for the remarkable work she had accomplished during her mandate and congratulated her successor. In recent years, conflicts affecting many countries had aggravated the refugee problem and had posed a variety of challenges to the international community. Pursuant to article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in accordance with the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, it was the duty of the international community to protect refugees, provide them with the necessary services and ensure their return to their countries of origin. In that regard, the principle of voluntary repatriation must remain at the heart of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Similarly, every effort must be made to bring to justice all those responsible for violations of the norms of international law because justice was a basic component for the peaceful and lasting settlement of conflicts. Reaffirming the close relationship between the right of asylum and basic rights, she noted that asylum was a form of right to life for refugees.

2. The situation of refugees, returning refugees and displaced persons in Africa and the Middle East continued to be of serious concern to the international community. The United Nations should place at the top of its agenda efforts to ensure the return of refugees, including Palestinians, to their countries of origin, provide assurances for their safety, dignity and ensure the payment of compensation for the property lost by refugees as a result of their expulsion, displacement or the occupation of their territories. The provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 of 11 December 1948, which confirmed the right of return of Palestinian refugees and called upon the Israeli authorities to respect international instruments and conventions guaranteeing the rights of expelled Palestinians, should be implemented without any reservations.

3. Despite some encouraging signs noted in the report of the High Commissioner (A/55/12), the international community needed to redouble its efforts to address the special problem posed by the refugee situation in Africa. It must assist those refugees not only because their presence constituted a lasting obstacle to economic and social development, but also because it threatened the security and stability of many States, including host countries.

4. It was also important to ensure the safety of personnel responsible for the protection of refugees and prevent parties to conflicts from using refugees as strategic pawns. In consultation with all those involved in humanitarian activities, an integrated approach needed to be adopted to the refugee problem that took into account its political, economic, social, military and other dimensions and respected the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

5. **Mr. Mangachi** (United Republic of Tanzania) endorsed the statement made the previous day by the representative of Mozambique on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the agenda item under consideration. He praised the work accomplished by UNHCR throughout its 50 years of existence and noted that his country had hosted a large number of refugees from southern Africa and the Great Lakes region for over 40 years. Some of the refugees had since been voluntarily repatriated to their countries of origin. The majority of the refugees still present in his country came from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. The United Republic of Tanzania had never placed any quotas on the number of asylum-seekers, despite the immense economic and social costs and considerable security problems that their presence caused. The Tanzanian population was becoming weary of the traditional hospitality extended to refugees as a result of the cyclical nature of refugee flows in the region, environmental degradation, the spread of diseases and the increase in crime. Furthermore, when supplies to refugee camps were inadequate, the refugees tended to become aggressive and violent towards the local population.

7. His delegation shared the concern expressed in the report of the High Commissioner (A/55/12) with respect to the security of both refugees and humanitarian personnel. The issue of security had become increasingly important in recent years. That

was the reason why his country found itself in the very difficult situation of hosting more than 800,000 refugees. His Government appreciated all the more the assistance provided by UNHCR and other donor countries to bolster its capacity to deal with security in refugee camps. He noted with appreciation that UNHCR had recently expanded its security operation by deploying additional field officers in the refugee-affected areas.

8. His Government continued to believe that voluntary repatriation was the cornerstone of any lasting solution to the refugee problem. However, repatriation could not take place before the conflicts in the country of origin were resolved. Nor could a lasting solution be found in the absence of reconciliation. Local integration in cases of mass influxes such as those witnessed by his country was not a feasible solution. On the other hand, resettlement in a third country should be encouraged. His delegation hoped that the global consultations that UNHCR had initiated would be comprehensive enough.

9. In conclusion, he paid tribute to Ms. Ogata for her exemplary work in the service of refugees and other vulnerable populations over the past 10 years. His Government also welcomed Mr. Lubbers to his new post and pledged its full cooperation.

10. **Ms. Korneliouk** (Belarus), after expressing appreciation to Ms. Ogata, said that Belarus had realized in recent years that uncontrolled migratory movements had negative effects on the stability and security of many societies. Belarus, which was at the crossroads of European routes, received influxes of illegal migrants from the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Near East. Their number was estimated at 200,000, which was high considering that Belarus had only 10.3 million inhabitants. That situation had adverse economic and social repercussions in that it led to an increase in crime, a growth in drug trafficking, and the emergence of a black market for labour.

11. Under those circumstances, it was understandable that her Government was deeply concerned about the problem of refugees and migrants, and was trying to resolve it while respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of nationals of the Republic. Belarus had recently adopted a number of legislative and regulatory texts on the subject, including an act on refugees, an act on foreign migrant workers, and an act supplementing and amending the act on refugees. It should be noted that all those texts were in conformity with the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Since 1 July 1998, her Government had established a procedure for determining the status of refugees and, over the past few years, the commission on migration had issued 238 decisions on requests for asylum, 190 of which had been favourable. Most of the requests for asylum, 141 of them, had been submitted by Afghan refugees. There were currently 500 requests pending before the commission.

12. With regard to immigration, her Government's priorities were the following: (a) to establish a reliable system for the regulation of migratory processes through the adoption and implementation of legislative and regulatory texts on the control of migration, immigration, freedom of movement and choice of residence; (b) assistance in the repatriation and resettlement of Belarusian nationals in the republics of the former Soviet Union; (c) legal protection of migrant workers from Belarus; and (d) resettlement of migrants who had fled from environmental disasters within the country.

13. **Ms. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein) said that during Ms. Ogata's tenure as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a role which she had performed remarkably well, the "global humanitarian map" had undergone fundamental changes at an unprecedented pace. Despite the efforts made to help displaced persons and refugees, at the beginning of a new century the crisis was continuing and even worsening. The United Nations system had not always been fully equipped to address such crises, and the obstacles in the way of an effective and rapid response to humanitarian disasters must be collectively addressed.

14. The issue of security must remain a priority. In recent years there had been a proliferation of internal armed conflicts and complex emergency situations, causing significantly higher risks for humanitarian operations and endangering their personnel. The United Nations must take determined action to guarantee the security of such personnel. The inclusion of attacks on humanitarian personnel in the list of war crimes in the statute of the International Criminal Court was a welcome step in that respect, but the Secretariat must take action, and financial constraints must not be a consideration. Both the credibility and the

effectiveness of the United Nations system were at stake.

15. Post-conflict situations also required increased attention, not only on the part of UNHCR, but also at the system-wide level. The establishment of a post-conflict peace-building unit within the Department of Political Affairs was an important step, and it was to be hoped that the consideration of the Brahimi report on peacekeeping operations would confirm the importance of post-conflict peace-building. The international community had paid a high price, at both the financial and the political levels, for its lack of attention to crisis situations in the aftermath of armed conflicts, and would continue to pay that price unless it changed its attitude in that respect.

16. Prevention was another area where enhanced political will was needed. The Secretary-General had stressed the importance of that issue to the work of the Organization; although there was some disagreement in that respect, it was a very useful approach, especially in relation to refugees. Establishing early-warning mechanisms as well as recognizing and addressing the root causes of conflicts at an early stage could go a long way towards alleviating the plight of refugees. The United Nations system needed to do more to address situations where claims based on the right of self-determination had the potential to erupt in violent conflicts, including mass displacements of people. A dialogue between the parties concerned would help prevent major humanitarian disasters. There was a need for a shift from reactive to proactive approaches.

17. The 50th anniversary of UNHCR in December 2000 would be an occasion to look back at a remarkable history, and also to look at the needs and challenges of the future. Her delegation welcomed the initiative taken by UNHCR to hold consultations on the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, on the understanding that those consultations would serve the purpose of ensuring its full implementation. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol must continue to serve as the cornerstone of international refugee law.

18. Liechtenstein wished to extend a welcome to Mr. Ruud Lubbers, and assure him of its support.

19. **Mr. Kryazhirskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the problem of refugees was unfortunately one of the characteristics of the current era and, in order to resolve it, efforts must be coordinated in particular at the political, socio-economic, humanitarian and legal levels. The concepts of a collective approach and of preventive measures mentioned in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/55/12) were essential.

20. It was in the first place the responsibility of Governments to resolve the problems of migration to their territories; over the past 10 years, his Government had taken important steps to improve the situation of refugees: it had acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted acts on refugees in 1993 and 1996 and decrees on the enforcement of those acts, established various mechanisms and infrastructures, defined the status of refugee and established a system for the control of migration and the granting of political and temporary asylum — guided by the programme of action adopted in 1996 at the Regional Conference of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a process which had been extended by five years on the decision of the Steering Group at its fifth session in June 2000, with the support of the States concerned, non-governmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations. His Government also reiterated its commitment to international humanitarian principles and to the concepts of solidarity and sharing of responsibilities set forth in the programme of action. It would not be possible to resolve the problem of migration in the region unless there was a balance between international solidarity and the responsibility of the Governments concerned, which was not yet the case. His Government welcomed the international financial assistance which had been provided — $10 million — but pointed out that it needed to be increased, and had for its part allocated $230 million for that purpose.

21. Humanitarian measures for the settlement of problems relating to refugees and displaced persons must be an integral part of the efforts made by the international community to resolve crises and move from emergency aid to the reorganization and recovery of civil society.

22. UNHCR should remain the principal institution in cases of crises; it had the appropriate personnel and means of action, and his Government supported the efforts of UNHCR to improve the effectiveness of its action and base it on the principles of impartiality, neutrality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. His Government also supported the idea of global consultations on strengthening the regime of

protection and the implementation of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. It believed that the mandate of UNHCR should be enlarged.

23. Lastly, his Government wished to express its concern about the increase in premeditated and violent attacks against humanitarian personnel.

24. **Mr. Fall** (Guinea) said that his country, which had received more than 700,000 refugees, was the world's largest refugee host country in proportion to its population. The presence of so many refugees was attributable to the serious internal crises in three neighbouring countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, which had triggered large-scale population movements towards Guinea.

25. The prolonged presence of refugees nonetheless had a negative impact on the host areas and on national development programmes. Furthermore, it created security and stability problems for Guinea. The country had been victim to a number of attacks which had caused the death of several hundred persons, major material damage and the displacement of more than 40,000 individuals. Refugees had been involved in those attacks.

26. Guinea, which had always fulfilled its humanitarian obligations, would not tolerate such a situation. Moreover, after the first attacks, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had invited the international community to make every effort to curb the phenomenon.

27. Guinea's commitment to refugees, however, had never waned, as evidenced by the National Assembly's adoption of a law on the status of refugees in Guinea and the recent establishment of a National Inter-ministerial Commission for Assistance to Refugees and Displaced Persons. On the occasion of the conference to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the OAU Convention on refugees, held in Guinea, in March 2000, and organized jointly by the Organization of African Unity and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international community had thanked Guinea for its hospitality.

28. Anxious to pursue its action in favour of refugees and to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel, his Government attached importance to the following measures: resettlement of refugees far from border regions; identification of refugees with a view to shielding them from allies of the attackers; provision of adequate assistance to support the pursuit of the repatriation of Liberian refugees; and assistance from the international community to host areas for refugees and persons displaced as a result of rebel attacks. His Government took the opportunity to request the effective convening, under United Nations auspices, of a conference of solidarity with the Republic of Guinea.

29. Lastly, his delegation paid homage to Ms. Sadako Ogata for the excellent work she had carried out on behalf of refugees during her mandate. It congratulated Mr. Ruud Lubbers on his election as head of the Office of the High Commissioner and assured him of the full cooperation of his Government.

30. *Ms. de Wet (Namibia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

31. **Ms. Monroy** (Mexico) congratulated Ms. Sadako Ogata, on behalf of her delegation, on the remarkable work she had done during nearly a decade at the helm of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

32. Throughout its history, Mexico had been a haven for many refugees, and had been enriched by their cultural, scientific and economic contributions. Mexico's host policy was based on the principles underlying its foreign policy, namely, the exercise of its sovereignty, solidarity, international cooperation and respect for human rights. It should be noted that, in April 2000, the Mexican Senate had approved Mexico's accession to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Mexico's accession to those three instruments had been unanimously supported by the various parliamentary groups.

33. Over the past two decades, most of the refugees received by Mexico had been from Guatemala. Through the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees, it had received support from UNHCR, then from the international community, particularly the European Union. Following the signature of the Guatemalan Peace Agreements, Mexico, with the support of UNHCR, had organized the repatriation of those refugees who wished to return home and the integration of those who had chosen to settle in Mexico.

34. During the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR, held in October 2000, Mexico had announced the presence in its territory of refugees

from more than 30 nations. As part of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of UNHCR, the Executive Committee had viewed a documentary film entitled "Mexico: tradition of asylum and refuge", which depicted the situation of men and women who had had to leave their countries in order to find refuge in Mexico. Within the current context of growing globalization, the case of Mexico could serve as an example to the international community.

35. Her delegation congratulated Mr. Ruud Lubbers on his recent election to the head of UNHCR and assured him of its full cooperation.

36. **Ms. Pérez-Contreras** (Venezuela) paid homage, on behalf of her Government, to Ms. Sadako Ogata for the remarkable manner in which, during the decade in which she had carried out her functions as head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which had enhanced the international community's understanding of the problems of refugees and displaced persons. She wished every success to the new High Commissioner, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, and assured him of her country's will to continue cooperating with UNHCR.

37. According to the report of the High Commissioner, owing to conflicts both old and new, the High Commissioner's office had had to step up its action, intervening in particularly dangerous situations on behalf of both refugees and its own personnel. As they multiplied, crisis situations triggered larger population movements and there were now more than 22 million refugees.

38. While the fundamental role of UNHCR was to ensure international protection of refugees and find lasting solutions to the problem, countries of origin and destination must, for their part, prevent population displacements, respond to requests for asylum and create the necessary conditions for the voluntary return of refugees or displaced persons.

39. Given its long experience, the High Commissioner's office should be well prepared to adapt to the new situations created by population displacements. In that connection, international protection mechanisms must be strengthened on the basis of the relevant international legislation. Furthermore, a broad and non-restrictive interpretation should be given to instruments and principles in order to ensure that persons in need of protection received adequate treatment.

40. In order to address refugee issues properly, not only should the principle of asylum be strengthened, as suggested by UNHCR, but also partnership between UNHCR and various entities, including governments, international organizations, cooperation and financing institutions, civil society and churches. Partnerships would make it possible, in particular, to tackle crises more effectively and intervene right in the prevention phase.

41. In the quest for lasting solutions, account must be taken of the fact that, like peace, development and stability are indissociable from refugee issues. The norms and principles of international law must be adapted to developments in the global situation in order to foster the strengthening of international protection.

42. Anxious to fulfil its international commitments and to ensure the protection of displaced persons, her Government had set up mechanisms to guarantee such protection. Thus, the new Constitution recognized and guaranteed the right of asylum and refuge, in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Moreover, the National Assembly would soon adopt a basic law on refugees and asylum-seekers, in accordance with the 1999 Constitution and the international treaties ratified by Venezuela.

43. Over the past two years, Venezuela had hosted refugees from neighbouring countries. In 1999, a technical committee composed of a number of ministries had been established to ensure that existing procedures were applied expeditiously and effectively, and that human rights were respected. In the case of Colombia, a binational prevention and protection mechanism had even been created, in cooperation with UNHCR, which had made it possible to ensure the voluntary return of displaced persons in complete safety and with dignity.

44. The safety of humanitarian personnel, who were doing remarkable work, should be ensured, since the perilous conditions in which they functioned sometimes endangered their lives and hindered humanitarian operations.

45. In addition, Venezuela supported the five areas for further action defined by the High Commissioner (A/55/12/Add.1, annex II): emergencies, security, complex population flows, peace-building and coexistence.

46. Lastly, Venezuela associated itself with the proposal to commemorate 20 June as "World Refugee Day".

47. **Ms. Wensley** (Australia) said that her Government wished to acknowledge the contribution of the outgoing High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, to the cause of the world's refugees, and welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to appoint Mr. Lubbers to succeed her.

48. Australia, which remained strongly committed to supporting UNHCR and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, wished the international protection system to operate in the most effective way possible.

49. The current international situation differed from that which had existed 50 years before, when UNHCR had been created and the 1951 Convention had been drafted. The Office must therefore be equipped with the means to meet the challenges ahead and to ensure that the international protection system could effectively carry out its mission on behalf of refugees.

50. The international protection system was jeopardized by a number of trends, including mixed migration flows, global mobility, differences in economic and social opportunity, the changing nature of conflicts, terrorism, people smuggling, and the abuse of asylum systems.

51. Increasing numbers of asylum-seekers did not follow the appropriate procedures, and wasted State resources, often to the detriment of those in greater need of protection.

52. In the quest for comprehensive and integrated solutions, Australia welcomed the global consultations, which would enable States to work together with UNHCR to resolve problems and to strengthen the international protection system.

53. One approach would be to assist countries of origin in meeting the basic needs of their inhabitants so they would not be forced to leave home. Australia had recently provided emergency drought relief to Afghanistan, which should reduce population displacement. Resources should also be mobilized to determine, in countries of first asylum, which refugees needed protection and which did not. The countries of first asylum and other donors should work together to provide temporary protection to refugees while durable solutions were found. More must also be done for countries of first asylum in particular.

54. With regard to resources, the principle of responsibility sharing in the provision of international protection should not obscure the fact that the capacity of States to provide resources was finite. Innovative funding sources must consequently be found.

55. Western States were spending US$ 10 billion yearly on determining the refugee status of some 500,000 asylum-seekers, of whom only a small percentage were refugees. The budget of UNHCR, at only US$ 1 billion, was insufficient to respond to the needs of more than 20 million refugees. Resources currently allocated to refugee determination in a number of destination countries could be better used to support sustainable repatriation and to assist countries of first asylum financially.

56. Another subject of concern for Australia was people smuggling, a growing international phenomenon organized by criminals whose activities were threatening the integrity of protection systems and regular migration programmes. To bring an end to that practice, Australia had developed a comprehensive strategy encompassing prevention, interception and reception, which aimed to tackle both people smuggling and protection for those who needed it.

57. UNHCR, which played a crucial role in the international protection system, needed to work efficiently and to focus on its core mandate. In a constantly changing environment, it should continuously review and reform its activities. Australia had been vigorously pursuing reform of the governance and budgetary processes of the Office, and perceptible changes had been noted in the following areas: greater focus on UNHCR's core mandate; multi-year strategic planning and setting of budget priorities; an improved balance between budget allocations and expected revenue; and strengthening of emergency preparedness and response capacity.

58. **Mr. Kpotsra** (Togo), speaking on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of which his country currently held the presidency, said that not only did Africa have the greatest number of least developed countries with the lowest incomes, the heaviest debts, and the greatest number of persons with HIV/AIDS and of those living in the direst poverty, but it was also the region most severely affected by refugee movements: according to the High Commissioner's

report (A/55/12), at the end of 1999, in Africa there had been more than 6 million refugees and some 20 million internally displaced persons.

59. The African States, like all other States, had the fundamental responsibility for ensuring the protection of refugees and displaced persons and for providing them with all necessary assistance. Often, however, they could not do so because of their own development problems, which were frequently exacerbated by natural disasters. The international community should therefore provide them with assistance, taking their problems into consideration. Moreover, an examination of the treatment of refugees showed that African refugees were accorded less attention and fewer resources than refugees from other regions of the world. Similarly, no African country had a repatriation and resettlement programme comparable to those that had been launched in Kosovo, for instance. Accordingly, at its thirty-sixth ordinary session, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government had expressed its grave concern regarding the discrimination against African refugees and displaced persons and had urged the international community to provide them with the same level of support and assistance as that provided to refugees and displaced persons in other regions.

60. The prolonged presence of refugees in a host country often had damaging consequences, including deterioration of the ecological, economic and social fabric. The international community should provide assistance not only to the refugees but also to the host countries. In that regard, he welcomed the decision of States Members of the United Nations at the Millennium Summit to strengthen international cooperation for countries hosting refugees and coordination of humanitarian assistance, as well as their decision to encourage regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability in Africa, and to ensure a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent.

61. It was essential to find lasting solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced persons, not only because of their growing numbers but also because of their political, economic and social impact on host countries. UNHCR was working hard to that end, but that was not sufficient. In order to succeed, the international community must support such efforts as the Mano River initiative, a subregional reconstruction and post-conflict peace-consolidation programme implemented by the Economic Commission for Africa, whose purpose was to facilitate the resettlement and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons by encouraging employment- and income-generating activities. The international community should also support the reintegration activities being carried out in countries emerging from conflict by the United Nations Development Programme in conjunction with UNHCR, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, the World Food Programme and non-governmental organizations.

62. Although the problems of refugees and displaced persons were often addressed in tandem, the international community seemed to devote less attention to the fate of displaced persons than it did to the situation of refugees. Yet displaced persons fled their homelands or habitual residence for the same reasons as refugees, and were confronted by the same problems. In January 2000, the Security Council had noted with concern that displaced persons, unlike refugees, did not benefit from a common protection regime. A legal instrument permitting the rendering of assistance to such persons should therefore be elaborated as a matter of urgency.

63. In the resolution on displaced persons which it had elaborated with UNHCR at a joint meeting in Conakry, OAU had invited its members to support and implement the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement elaborated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons. The General Assembly or UNHCR should now provide follow-up and devise standards — including on the basis of the above-mentioned Guiding Principles — to permit the problems of displaced persons to be satisfactorily resolved.

64. One way of effectively resolving the problem of refugees in Africa was to eradicate the root causes of conflicts, which lay at the heart of most mass displacements of populations. In that connection, he welcomed the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) prepared by the Secretary-General at the request of the Security Council. His delegation also applauded the establishment by the President of the General Assembly of an ad hoc open-ended working group to study the issue and to ensure follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations made by the

Secretary-General, agreed conclusion 1992/2 of the Economic and Social Council and questions relating to the eradication of poverty, the alleviation of debt and the fight against HIV/AIDS. It was to be hoped that the international community would pay due attention to the recommendations formulated by the Secretary-General in his report on the causes of conflict in Africa and to the proposals contained in the report of the ad hoc working group, and also that it would ensure the follow-up required.

65. **Ms. Boyko** (Ukraine) said that recent years had been extremely challenging for UNHCR, which had found itself providing assistance to ever-increasing numbers of refugees and to host countries, which were often impoverished. UNHCR had also been faced with the erosion of humanitarian principles characterized by forced repatriation, the refusal to host refugees or to allow humanitarian organizations to gain access to them, and the frequent undermining of the safety of humanitarian staff. The international community's support — not only in financial terms, but also in terms of an affirmation of political will — was essential to ensure that UNHCR could offer protection to refugees and displaced persons, provide durable solutions to their problems and thus contribute to a return of peace and stability in many countries.

66. Thanks to its liberal legislation on migration and its political stability, and despite economic hardship, Ukraine now attracted large numbers of refugees. As at 1 July 2000, an estimated 3,000 refugees from 44 countries had been living in its territory and more than 3,000 persons from Abkhazia had been granted temporary asylum. The refugees enjoyed the right to education and medical assistance; they also benefited from social services and were permitted to take up employment. Since January 1999, they also enjoyed the right to pensions and material assistance.

67. One of Ukraine's migration policy priorities involved the return of Crimean Tartars. To date, more than 265,000 formerly deported Tartars had returned to their homeland, where they accounted for more than 10 per cent of the population. Measures had been taken in their interests in the social and economic, political, legal and humanitarian spheres; they also benefited from international assistance. Ukraine was, moreover, determined to reduce the number of stateless persons. To that end, it had amended its citizenship laws and had concluded agreements with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to enable their citizens to acquire the citizenship of one of the other three countries more easily. Ukraine wished to thank the UNHCR office in Ukraine for providing Ukrainian migration-service authorities with the necessary technical facilities, methodical support and training for civil servants responsible for dealing with refugee issues.

68. Ukraine, as an initiator of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, continued to support the measures adopted by the international community to strengthen the security of all humanitarian workers. Her delegation had studied the report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494) and endorsed the recommendations made therein. It also wished to stress the importance of the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 11 February 2000 (S/PRST/2000/4) which recognized the responsibility of all actors to ensure the security of United Nations and associated personnel as well as the personnel of humanitarian organizations.

69. Lastly, the Government of Ukraine wished to pay tribute to Mrs. Sadako Ogata for her work at the helm of UNHCR, and to welcome her successor, Mr. Ruud Lubbers.

70. **Ms. Gligorova** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) paid tribute to Mrs. Ogata for her outstanding work and welcomed her successor, Mr. Lubbers. It was regrettable that the beginning of the twenty-first century would be remembered as a period characterized by flagrant disrespect in many parts of the world, including the Balkans, for the fundamental principles of democracy.

71. The consequences of the crisis in Kosovo — which had posed a serious threat to the stability and security of countries in the Balkans and elsewhere — continued to be felt. Macedonia had hosted 360,000 refugees, accounting for 18 per cent of its total population. In keeping with the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, those persons had acquired the status of humanitarian refugees.

72. The international community had commended the efforts undertaken by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards the resolution of that huge humanitarian crisis, but it had failed, nonetheless, to provide the economic and financial assistance which it should have provided. The international community now should do its part by facilitating the return in full security to their homes of more than 6,000 persons still

residing in Macedonia. Half were currently staying in host families, the other half in group-accommodation facilities.

73. The Republic of Macedonia was all too conscious of the link between conflicts on the one hand and refugees and displaced persons on the other. The country's experience had shown that humanitarian assistance must be accompanied by political and confidence-building measures. Above all, however, conflict prevention and peace-building were required. In that connection, a centre for preventive action and conflict resolution had recently been established in Skopje.

74. The recovery and reconstruction of the Balkans region were essential. Obligations and promises should not remain a dead letter. The objective of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was to achieve stable and prosperous democratic societies in that region. It was to be hoped that the recent political changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would permit the region to take steps in that direction. Equally welcome was the fact that the Security Council had stressed that the protection of refugees and their rights was an integral part of its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

75. The achievements of UNHCR over its five decades of existence had been considerable. The agency currently provided protection and assistance to 22.3 million persons. The international community must ensure that it was able to fulfil that noble task, in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies and development organizations.

76. **Mr. Palwankar** (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that, in recent months, the question of displaced persons had remained a major concern for States and humanitarian organizations; a high proportion of such persons were still not receiving any protection or assistance whether because the response to their needs was inadequate or because of the prevailing lack of security. As one of the leading humanitarian organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was firmly resolved to take an active part in the discussions under way on that matter and to promoting effective institutional cooperation on behalf of displaced persons.

77. Large-scale population movements within a country were usually a consequence of conflicts or internal disturbances affecting the entire civilian population. Problems relating to internal displacement could not therefore be resolved without understanding the plight of the civilian population and taking steps to improve it. ICRC believed that persons who had been displaced as a result of internal conflicts, most of whom were civilians, were protected by international humanitarian law and that that body of law, which was legally binding on both State and non-State actors, provided an adequate means of coping with most of the problems that arose in connection with population movements resulting from armed conflict. It also believed that responsibility for meeting the protection and assistance needs of displaced persons belonged, in the first instance, to States.

78. In the context of consultations on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, ICRC wished to recall that the situation of internally displaced persons was not comparable to that of refugees as far as protection was concerned, as the legal regimes applicable to the two categories were not identical. In particular, persons displaced within a State, unlike refugees, were nationals of that State and, as such, benefited from the entire range of rights under domestic law.

79. As had been pointed out in discussions on humanitarian issues in recent weeks by relevant bodies of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, acts of violence committed against humanitarian personnel were on the increase and humanitarian organizations sometimes had to scale down or even suspend their activities, thus leaving displaced persons without protection or assistance. ICRC pointed out in that connection that international humanitarian law required States to respect and protect humanitarian personnel working in conflict situations and that attacks on humanitarian workers, who were civilians, were considered to be war crimes.

80. The complexity and magnitude of the issue of displaced persons obliged humanitarian organizations to pool their efforts. It was in that context that ICRC was taking an active part in meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Moreover it had the status of standing invitee and had lent its backing, through both its headquarters and its field delegations to the Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement, and also to the Secretary-General's

special representative for internally displaced persons. At the same time, it remained firmly resolved to carry out its role as provided for in the Geneva Conventions, as a neutral and independent intermediary in situations of armed conflict.

81. **Mr. Paiva** (International Organization for Migration) paid tribute to the unstinting efforts made by Mrs. Ogata as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and welcomed the fact that the long-standing de facto partnership between his organization and UNHCR had been codified in a formal Memorandum of Understanding which had laid the foundation for clearer guidelines on operational collaboration and for regular consultation. The previous year's supplementary agreement on modalities for cooperation in the transport sector was an excellent example of such collaboration which had been of benefit to thousands of persons in places as different as Kosovo, Timor and Zambia.

82. There had never been a greater need for partnership between organizations dealing with human displacement. Today's world was characterized by population movements, the reasons for which were increasingly complex. That fact challenged traditional definitions and methods and it was appropriate to share views on such questions which affected States, intergovernmental bodies and NGOs. It was essential to plug the gaps in the international humanitarian order which had developed over the past 50 years, but without forsaking the significant gains that had been achieved. IOM welcomed in that connection the call to dialogue made by UNHCR through its "three circles" initiative relating to the 1951 Convention and looked forward to taking part in consultations on the so-called "outer", or third, circle which focused on tensions between migration concerns and refugee protection. Such difficulties were perhaps inevitable at the present time. As the *World Migration Report* amply demonstrated, seeking a future abroad had never been so realizable and there had never been such complex reasons for doing so: the opening of borders, the accessibility of transportation over long distances, the explosion of images and information about faraway places, the implosion of some States and the proliferation of conflicts and rights abuses. Managing migration flows while respecting humanitarian obligations consecrated in international law was all the more difficult. However, one could not be considered without the other and the past decade had shown that a holistic approach to international population flows was viable. IOM was pleased to be a partner with UNHCR in supporting the efforts of States to develop such approaches to refugee and migration issues. The two organizations were not only collaborating in capacity-building projects but also supported the growing number of regional consultation mechanisms where regional trends in population displacement and related problems could be discussed. The CIS Conference and its follow-up process were one example, but in other regions — Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas — the two organizations were also helping countries of origin, transit and destination to come together in dialogue and to respond to the challenge presented by migration.

83. IOM was unreservedly committed to further developing, in collaboration with UNHCR, a humanitarian regime that took account of special circumstances.

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.3/55/SR.50

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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 50th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 November 2000, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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00-73250 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.21).

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.21: Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

1. **Mr. Albin** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.21 on behalf of the sponsors. He also paid tribute to the outgoing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Sadako Ogata, and pledged his Government's support to the incoming High Commissioner, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands. As a host country with extensive experience in devising lasting humanitarian solutions to refugee issues, Mexico hoped to be elected to the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as an additional member. It was now a signatory to both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

**Agenda item 114: Human rights questions** (*continued*)

**(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.34, A/C.3/55/L.36, A/C.3/55/L.37, A/C.3/55/L.39, L.40, L.41, L.44-L.46, L.53, L.54, L.57-L.59)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.34: Human rights and cultural diversity*

2. **Mr. Alaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.34, which was based on a similar resolution adopted by consensus at the previous session. The new paragraph 2 reflected the internationally recognized linkage between the challenges of globalization and the cultural life of different peoples and nations. Inter-cultural dialogue represented an important instrument for promoting peace and partnership in the world and the universality of human rights.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.36: Proclamation of 18 December as International Migrant's Day*

3. **Ms. Monroy** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.36 on behalf of the original sponsors as well as Azerbaijan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Honduras and South Africa. The United States of America had withdrawn its sponsorship.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.37: United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and public information activities in the field of human rights*

4. **Ms. Toomey** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.37. Armenia, Botswana, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, India, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Togo and Vanuatu had joined the original sponsors.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.39: Situation of human rights in Cambodia*

5. **Mr. Ito** (Japan) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.39 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The text had been revised to reflect the requirements of the sponsors. In paragraph 12, the words "international standards, such as" had been deleted. To follow paragraph 18, a new paragraph had been added which read: "Takes note with interest of the signing by Cambodia of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court". In paragraph 26, before the word "prevent", the words "take all steps to" should be added. Several minor editorial changes had also been made.

6. The draft resolution was the result of fruitful consultations with the Government of Cambodia. It aimed to encourage the international community to assist the Government in improving the situation of human rights in the country, the main obstacle to progress being a lack of resources.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.40: Promoting and consolidating democracy*

7. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Romania) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.40 on behalf of the sponsors, joined by Iceland, Malta, Mongolia, South Africa and Togo. All sponsors had emphasized the value they attached to the principles and practices of democracy. Although there were differing viewpoints on the means of promoting and consolidating democracy, there was wide recognition that democracy afforded people a stake in society, and that it provided the best political and social environment for a genuine and full enjoyment of all human rights. Moreover, democracy was paramount in stable societies that strove for a better and more prosperous life. It also represented the best means of addressing the root causes of today's violent conflicts, which were predominantly internal.

8. The draft resolution reflected broad support for democracy and democratization. Democracy by its very nature was perfectible: there was always room for improving the functioning of democratic institutions and for fostering deeper respect for democratic values.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.44: Strengthening of the rule of law*

9. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.44 on behalf of the original sponsors and Eritrea.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.45: Respect for the right to universal freedom of travel and the vital importance of family reunification*

10. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba) introduced and orally revised draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.45 on behalf of the original sponsors and Honduras. At the end of the second preambular paragraph, the words "as well as article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" had been added.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.46: Human rights and scientific and technological progress*

11. **Ms. Kornelíouk** (Belarus) said that her delegation wished to withdraw draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.46 from the Committee's consideration during the current session, since although a number of delegations had expressed support for the draft, further consultations were in order.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.53: Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity*

12. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.53 on behalf of the sponsors. Drawing attention to a typographical error, he said that Ireland had been included in the list of sponsors in place of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.41: Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance*

13. **Mr. Ryan** (Ireland), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.41 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were joined by Azerbaijan, India and Peru. In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders had called for human beings to respect each other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language; everything possible must be done to translate that declaration into reality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided a forceful reminder of the international community's duty with regard to freedom of religion or belief, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights further emphasized that such freedom, including the freedom to change one's religion or belief, was one of the core human rights from which no derogation could be made. Those freedoms were also specifically addressed in the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. However, despite some progress, religious persecution remained widespread.

14. The report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on religious intolerance (A/55/280 and Add.1 and 2) showed that no religion or State had a monopoly on intolerance and painted a grim picture of the scale of religious persecution and discrimination in all parts of the world. In the most severe cases, people had been tortured or summarily executed solely on account of their religion or belief, while the escalation in religiously inspired violence and the destruction of places of worship was a cause of grave concern. Women's fundamental rights continued to be violated in the name of religion. Religious minorities continued to be persecuted and the freedom of religion and belief of vulnerable groups was subject to restrictions. All Governments must ensure that the

rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities were fully respected.

15. It was important that Governments should cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, including by allowing in situ visits, especially in the lead-up to the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, at which discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief would be an important issue. Human rights education had a vital role in creating greater tolerance, and the holding of a conference in 2001 on school education in relation to freedom of religion and belief (A/55/280, para. 121) was a welcome initiative. The draft resolution also paid tribute to the important work of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations in promoting greater freedom of religion or belief.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.54: Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights*

16. **Mr. El Khadraoui** (Belgium), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.54 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were joined by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Morocco, New Zealand, Poland and the Philippines. The importance of regional arrangements in the promotion and protection of human rights had long been recognized, most notably in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The draft resolution was largely based on the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/279) and highlighted the significant progress made in recent months. It welcomed the greater cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and regional intergovernmental organizations, particularly through its technical cooperation programme, as well as that between international and regional human rights monitoring bodies. It also welcomed the appointment of four regional advisers, as recommended at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, to encourage greater coordination and technical cooperation at the regional level, and took note of various regional initiatives undertaken recently on every continent.

17. He introduced a minor revision to paragraph 4, where "protecting the enjoyment of human rights" should read "protecting all human rights".

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.55: Human rights and extreme poverty*

18. **Mr. Chuquihuara** (Peru), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.55 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were now joined by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Thailand. The enjoyment of basic human rights was far from automatic, and poverty was one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the standards of living that would allow everyone to enjoy those rights. Despite the efforts of the international community to reduce poverty, around a billion people were living below the poverty line, were illiterate or lacked safe drinking water, and over two billion were without proper sanitation.

19. At the heart of the draft resolution was the recognition that extreme poverty inhibited the enjoyment by individuals of their human rights. Urgent international action was called for to combat the exclusion revealed in the social and economic statistics and to encourage people to achieve their development potential, which was why the draft resolution stressed the importance of international cooperation.

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.57: The right to development*

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.58: Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights*

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.59: Human rights and unilateral coercive measures*

20. **Mr. Boang** (Botswana) introduced draft resolutions A/C.3/55/L.57, L.58 and L.59 on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and China and the other sponsors. Japan and New Zealand had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.57, which, in the interests of achieving consensus, was almost identical to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/5.

21. Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.58, which was based on General Assembly resolution 54/113 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/70, was aimed at forging closer links between all stakeholders in the United Nations system. He introduced two revisions to the text: in the fourth preambular paragraph, "Reaffirming" was to be replaced by

"Recognizing also", and paragraph 1 was to be deleted and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.

22. Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.59 addressed the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the economic and social development of the countries affected and the obstacles they posed for the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly the right to development. It contained three notable additions to the previous year's text: the seventh preambular paragraph and paragraph 1 bis were new, and in the eighth preambular paragraph, the phrase "with all their negative implications for the social-humanitarian activities and economic and social development of developing countries" had been inserted after the words "promulgated and implemented".

**(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives** (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.38)

*Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.38: Situation of human rights in Myanmar*

23. **Ms. Mårtensson** (Sweden), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.38 on behalf of the sponsors, said that they were now joined by Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Poland and the United States of America. In paragraph 10, "to implement any of the three recommendations" should be replaced by "to meet all the three recommendations".

24. The draft resolution aimed to reflect accurately the current situation in Myanmar. While the Government's cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the reopening of most university courses were welcome steps, the overall human rights situation, particularly with regard to political rights and abuses of the legal system, continued to deteriorate. Among the many human rights violations deplored in the draft resolution were extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture and forced labour. Moreover, despite the Government's earlier assurances, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar had still not been invited to visit the country. A time frame should be established for a dialogue leading to national reconciliation, as called for by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

**Agenda item 109: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (*continued*)

*General discussion (continued)*

25. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Angola) associated his delegation with the statement made by Mozambique on behalf of the South African Development Community at the 48th meeting.

26. Angola fully supported the excellent work done by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and acknowledged the contribution of the personnel of the Office of the High Commissioner (UNHCR) who had lost their lives.

27. With over 20 per cent of its population displaced by war, and 4 per cent living in neighbouring States, Angola was well aware of the problems relating to refugees and internally displaced persons. It was grateful for the financial assistance provided by the United States and by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, who was currently visiting the country, to enhance UNHCR programmes.

28. The Government also appreciated the assistance provided by all humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, and extended its thanks to Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and all other countries hosting Angolan refugees.

29. The Government's commitment to providing care for those in need and relocating those deprived of the most basic needs had been demonstrated by its allocation of $55 million to humanitarian assistance programmes aimed particularly at displaced persons. Its priorities for the coming months included the continuation of life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups; resettlement of displaced persons; development of contingency plans for areas where new displacements were expected; and preparation of rapid-impact projects aimed at restoring basic services and rural infrastructure.

30. The Government had initiated a programme to support the primary needs of Angolan refugees, based on strategies focusing on the legal aspects of the refugee situation and on the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. It attached great importance to strengthening multilateral

assistance through partnership between all providers of humanitarian assistance.

31. Respect for international humanitarian and human rights laws was essential to ensuring the rights of refugees and displaced persons, while the safety and security of humanitarian personnel was vital to the success of humanitarian or peacekeeping operations. Angola acknowledged its primary responsibility for the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel.

32. The international community should increase assistance for refugees and displaced persons, supporting programmes aimed at alleviating poverty among them and enhancing coordination under the leadership of the Governments of affected countries, including through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

33. **Mr. Regmi** (Nepal) paid tribute to the outgoing High Commissioner and her staff for their dedication and commitment to resolving the problems of refugees and displaced persons worldwide. He also congratulated the High Commissioner's successor on his appointment.

34. The High Commissioner's report (A/55/12) provided a distressing overview of the plight of refugees. Their numbers had grown, leaving no region of the world unaffected. The victims were mostly children and women, forced to flee from persecution, armed conflict, natural disasters or human rights violations.

35. Throughout its history, UNHCR had successfully alleviated refugees' sufferings through a strategy of prevention, preparedness and provision of practical solutions. The Office should enhance its strategy by targeting regions where the situation remained unstable. However, no lasting solutions to refugee problems would be found without addressing the root causes in a timely manner.

36. His delegation welcomed the priority attention given by UNHCR to the special needs of refugee women and children and to the environmental impact of a refugee presence (ibid., paras. 102-112). It was deeply concerned by UNHCR's discouraging financial situation, since the Office could not fulfil its mandate without adequate and sustained financial support. All donor countries, particularly in the developed world, should increase their contributions and honour their pledges in order to enable the Office to discharge its responsibilities for saving lives.

37. Nepal was grateful for UNHCR's assistance with the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees it was hosting and appealed to the international community to maintain current levels of assistance, as a basic minimum. In keeping with its belief in the right of refugees to return safely and with dignity to their country, the Government was working to resolve the refugee problem through bilateral negotiations with the Bhutanese Government. It hoped that the latter would show greater willingness to find an early solution.

38. The presence of large refugee populations in least developed countries aggravated existing economic, social and environmental problems. Such countries needed international help and support in order to avoid further impoverishment and chaos.

39. **Mrs. Mohanta** (India) said that the High Commissioner would be remembered for her inspiring leadership and tireless work in the face of daunting challenges. Her vision would continue to inspire UNHCR and all humanitarian actors. India also congratulated her successor on his appointment.

40. There was no substitute for a concerted international response to the increasingly complex global refugee situation. The principle of international solidarity and burden sharing was well established, but frequently ignored by rich countries. The quality of asylum had deteriorated, with refugees sometimes facing border closures, interdiction at sea, expulsion, premature return to an unsafe environment and prolonged detention by countries with the means to offer them both asylum and protection. While societies had a natural inclination to protect their own prosperity, restrictive practices had a detrimental impact on world public opinion regarding refugee protection.

41. The needs of developing countries, which were most affected by refugee problems, should be placed at the top of the refugee agenda. The economic and social impact of hosting large refugee populations should be systematically assessed and addressed through global cooperation, lest the willingness to accept refugees declined.

42. India noted with concern, as reflected in the High Commissioner's report (paras. 119-124), that UNHCR was chronically under-funded and that funding

shortfalls had risen. It was regrettable that the resulting expenditure cuts had affected priority areas such as women and children. Long-term planning was not possible without reliable funding. Moreover, the tendency of donors to focus on a few refugee situations at the expense of others, notably in Africa, was particularly worrying. Donor countries should provide reliable funding and allow the Office to determine the priorities for its use.

43. Scant attention had been paid to abject poverty as a cause for refugee outflows. Poverty and degrading conditions often brought out the worst in human beings, giving rise to conflicts that blurred their root causes. Large refugee outflows were the result of such conflicts or of a natural desire to find better opportunities. Rather than focusing on repatriation, the international community would do better to elaborate a preventive strategy aimed at addressing poverty and investing in development as the most cost-effective approach.

44. To see solutions to refugee questions through the prism of accession to relevant international instruments was to take a narrow view. Although India had not acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its commitment to humanitarianism was second to none. India hosted a large number of refugees and provided support through programmes financed entirely from its own resources. It had consistently demonstrated its commitment to the principles of protection and non-refoulement. With regard to the proposed global consultations on international protection, it hoped that they would take a practical rather than narrowly legalistic approach.

45. States needed to do more to ensure the safety and security of refugees and of UNHCR personnel. Assistance could be offered to enhance the capacity of States to guarantee security, but attempts to impose solutions would be counterproductive.

46. While States bore the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, international action should ensure respect for the concept of sovereignty. Any action should be taken only at the request of the country concerned.

47. **Mr. Widodo** (Indonesia) extended his delegation's appreciation to the High Commissioner for her many accomplishments during her tenure, and congratulated her successor, to whom it would offer its full cooperation.

48. Indonesia was currently experiencing its own problems after thousands of refugees and displaced persons had fled East Timor in 1999. The prolonged presence of refugee camps along a State's borders created problems of a humanitarian, national and international nature, requiring the concerted efforts of all parties concerned in order to find a comprehensive solution. Recognizing the need for fresh momentum to resolve the refugee issue, Indonesia had adopted a comprehensive plan of action in collaboration with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. Registration of the remaining refugees was one of the main tasks. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (para. 69), over 150,000 persons had returned to East Timor, a process in which Indonesia had played an important role.

49. Despite the progress made, a number of difficulties had been encountered. The Government of Indonesia strongly condemned the killing of UNHCR staff members in Atambua, West Timor, and the attack on the UNHCR office on 6 September 2000. The President had written to the Secretary-General to express his condemnation of the violence and provide assurances of his determination to conduct a full-scale investigation. A number of arrests had already been made.

50. Indonesia remained in constant contact with the United Nations on all matters relating to the deaths of the UNHCR personnel and the safety of the remaining refugees. Two battalions had been sent to the area to reinforce law and order, while the Government had addressed many of the concerns raised by UNHCR and had extended its cooperation to the Organization.

51. Indonesia had also invited members of the Security Council to visit Atambua later in November to witness progress achieved in restoring security to the area and preparations for the registration of refugees. However, such a visit was not intended to meet the conditions laid down by UNHCR for the refugees' return, since the agency was responsible for the refugees in West Timor. It was most regrettable that UNHCR had withdrawn its personnel from the area.

52. As humanitarian needs and suffering continued in many parts of the world, UNHCR had discovered that lasting solutions took time, effort and sustained international engagement. Any effort to resolve refugee questions should also involve the country concerned,

so that the particularities of each situation could be taken into account.

53. Indonesia was committed to assuring the safety and security of humanitarian workers. However, all international organizations, including UNHCR, had a duty to care for their own staff. Governments and all other actors should protect humanitarian workers, while the individuals concerned should respect national laws and customs.

54. The Indonesian Government spared no effort to provide food and shelter to the refugees in West Timor and would continue to fulfil its moral and legal obligations towards them. However, it was imperative that the root causes of the problem were addressed. That should go beyond appeals for the disarming and disbanding of militia to include calls on the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to implement stability and development programmes that would facilitate voluntary repatriation.

55. States had primary responsibility for protecting the rights of refugees within their territory and Indonesia was working to fulfil its obligations to provide relief to those in need. It hoped to continue its long history of contributing to the strengthening of UNHCR and of according refugees the right to asylum. Its commitment to resolving emerging issues remained unchanged.

56. **Mrs. Nicodemos** (Brazil) paid tribute to the High Commissioner for having earned the respect of Member States, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors in discharging her duties with great competence and a sense of responsibility. She had faced difficult challenges with both courage and compassion, drawing also on the dedication of UNHCR officials. By ensuring respect for the basic tenets of refugee and international humanitarian law, UNHCR was not only fulfilling its mandate but also helping to build peace and stability.

57. It was becoming increasingly difficult to provide humanitarian assistance, as illustrated by the recent murder of UNHCR personnel. The international community should do its utmost to prevent the recurrence of such shameful acts, while Governments should protect humanitarian personnel working under their jurisdiction. For its part, Brazil was committed to strengthening international cooperation aimed at protecting United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. Accordingly, it had ratified the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

58. Lack of resources posed a major problem when dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons. Entire regions and countries plagued by humanitarian crises did not receive the attention they deserved. The root cause was lack of political will. UNHCR had done a great deal to help those in need, particularly those away from the limelight of international attention, and Member States had a duty to provide it with the political and material support it required.

59. It was disturbing that refugees and asylum-seekers were increasingly targeted in armed conflicts, or made scapegoats in other situations. The international community had an urgent duty to uphold the institution of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, which constituted the foundations of international protection for refugees. Xenophobic and racist attacks and discrimination against refugees should be strongly condemned and those responsible brought to justice.

60. Brazil's National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) had strengthened its cooperation with UNHCR. Partnerships with civil society helped meet the basic needs of refugees, and measures had been taken to facilitate their access to the labour market, social security and public health. A technical cooperation agreement had been signed with UNHCR in 2000 to improve Brazil's organizations and bodies providing assistance, to raise awareness of refugees' plight and to stimulate interest in the subject among academics.

61. Brazil fully subscribed to the main international instruments for the protection of refugees and had expanded its interpretation of those instruments to include the situation of individuals fleeing from serious human rights violations as a reason for granting refugee status. During its current presidency of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), it had initiated negotiations on a protocol aimed at harmonizing the relevant legislation of member and associated countries.

62. The provision of adequate resources for humanitarian assistance should be given urgent priority. The idea that developing countries were only recipients of aid was a myth. Many such countries bore the brunt of assisting refugees from neighbouring

States and should be rewarded by the international community for their generosity.

63. The fate of millions depended on international political will. The international community should honour its commitments so that refugees would be given hope and be able to enjoy their human rights.

64. **Mr. Alemán** (Ecuador) expressed concern at the worsening of the conflict in Colombia, which had driven refugees across the border into Ecuador, and he therefore welcomed the establishment of a UNHCR liaison office in Ecuador and expressed support for UNHCR's efforts undertaken in coordination with civil society partners. His Government would continue to encourage such actions and he called for the support of the international community in developing response capabilities for such emergency situations.

65. He expressed grave concern at the case of an Ecuadorian banker, a fugitive from justice, who had been arrested in Lebanon and was to be extradited to Ecuador, but who had been able to escape justice when the UNHCR representative in Lebanon had declared him a political refugee. Although UNHCR had recognized that official's error, the extradition process had been interrupted and Ecuador's relationship with UNHCR and those countries which had intervened to prevent extradition had been previously damaged. The official responsible for that error should be severely sanctioned.

66. The year 2001 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. He paid tribute to all those who worked to protect the rights of refugees and expressed support for the proposal by South Africa that 20 June of every year should be declared "World Refugee Day" as part of efforts to increase awareness and find lasting solutions to the refugee problem. His Government also supported UNHCR's consultations with Governments on ways to revitalize the international refugee protection regime.

67. **Mr. Cong** Jun (China) said that ethnic, religious and territorial disputes continued to threaten international peace and security and to create large numbers of refugees. Three quarters of those refugees were concentrated in the developing countries, causing grave social, political, economic and environmental disruption while developed countries, in violation of internationally recognized principles, had been implementing increasingly restrictive asylum policies. Furthermore, the worsening of regional conflicts had gravely threatened the security of refugee camps as well as humanitarian workers.

68. For 50 years the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol had served as the legal basis for refugee protection. New problems had arisen, however, such as internally displaced persons, large outflows of populations, growing numbers of economic migrants and the abuse of asylum procedures. He therefore expressed satisfaction that UNHCR was undertaking global negotiations in the context of the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention with a view to making the refugee protection system more effective and dynamic. UNHCR must continue to play a central role, and negotiations should aim at ensuring that UNHCR and countries of asylum received sufficient resources to meet the needs of refugees, so that the developing countries in particular could reduce their economic and social burdens and facilitate long-term development while paving the way for ultimate settlement of the refugee problem.

69. In order to eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem, countries must respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and abide by the principles of non-aggression, non-interference, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, instruct strict adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international norms, as well as promote economic and social development. Countries of origin, asylum and settlement as well as donor countries could resolve the refugee problem by respecting the principles of international solidarity and burden sharing.

70. Despite its own economic constraints, China had provided asylum and protection for 280,000 refugees and had maintained a good relationship with UNHCR, whose revolving fund in China had been functioning well. His Government would continue to cooperate closely with UNHCR and would strengthen its cooperation with the international community and concerned parties with a view to contributing to the resolution of the refugee problem.

71. **Mr. Weiss** (Austria) recalled that it had been the massive exodus of some 200,000 refugees from Hungary into Austria in 1956 that had been UNHCR's first major emergency as well as the first example of partnership with other key actors like the International

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Austrian Red Cross and other voluntary agencies. Since that time, nearly 1 million persons had received refuge on Austrian soil, and refugees and their descendants made up about 10 per cent of the Austrian population. That commitment as a host country had continued uninterrupted through many crises until the present day and would continue in the years to come.

72. Speaking on behalf of the Austrian Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he noted that OSCE had evolved from a standard-setting forum into a full-fledged operational institution with 70 per cent of its budget going to field activities. The increasing operational cooperation between OSCE and the United Nations system represented an outstanding example of implementation of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

73. One of Austria's priorities had been to develop comprehensive approaches to migration management, and the Platform for Cooperative Security had been adopted as an Annex to the Istanbul Charter for European Security with a view to promoting a culture of cooperation among many actors, including UNHCR, as in the case of Kosovo. Interdisciplinary cooperation had also been reinforced by expanding cooperation at Headquarters level with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and the Council of Europe in the context of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Conference process to include field operations and representatives of other relevant international organizations. With regard to the Chechen conflict, a regular information and consultation network between OSCE and international partners on the humanitarian and human rights situation in the northern Caucasus had been created. Humanitarian aid in that region was an absolute priority, and the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, together with non-governmental organizations, was implementing humanitarian projects which in an initial phase were concentrating on children and youth. OSCE would continue to reinforce such cooperation with UNHCR.

74. **Mr. Sangaré** (Mali) said that more than ever before it was essential that the international community should develop effective strategies to deal with the problems posed by refugees, displaced persons, returnees and victims of natural disasters. The root causes of armed conflicts such as economic recession, poverty, lack of democracy, ethnic prejudice and religious intolerance must be addressed through the promotion of a culture of peace, democracy and dialogue between civilizations. Peace must be consolidated in post-conflict periods and those guilty of crimes must be punished. Early warning systems for natural disasters must also be developed, and he noted that some 90 per cent of the victims lived in developing countries, where poverty and population pressure exposed the population to natural risks which could rapidly develop into disaster situations.

75. The money spent on wars and intervention and rescue activities would be better spent in the cause of sustainable and equitable development. To that end, West Africa had established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a peacekeeping and conflict-prevention, -resolution and -management mechanism, which had in turn created the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which could be an example for the creation of a similar African force. He also supported the creation of a "council of wise men" drawn from across Africa to promote cooperation. Those measures had been one result of increased integration in West Africa. In that context, he noted the financial assistance provided by the European Union through its European Development Fund (EDF) to the regional integration efforts, and urged the European Union to take into account the conclusions of the Bamako meeting of the EDF national coordinators.

76. Africa had the largest number of conflicts, refugees and repatriated and displaced persons but received far less assistance than other regions of the world. He therefore called on the international community to provide greater support for the plan adopted by the joint Organization of African Unity (OAU)/UNHCR special meeting of technical experts held in Conakry in March 2000, and for the implementation of the conclusions of the sixth OAU/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) seminar on international humanitarian law held in Addis Ababa in May 2000.

77. Humanitarian assistance must be provided wherever needed, in a spirit of international cooperation. States must honour their commitments under international humanitarian law, and develop national mechanisms to punish violations. He paid tribute to the efforts of ICRC and called on West African States to take into account the results of the meeting of the West Africa ICRC advisory committees

held in Bamako in March 2000. Consultations must also be undertaken within the United Nations to better define the notion of humanitarian intervention and coordinate it with peacekeeping operations. In that context, he expressed support for the Brahimi report on United Nations peace operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and stressed the need to develop new standards for United Nations humanitarian intervention.

78. He welcomed the outcome of a seminar on humanitarian intervention organized in May 2000 by the Government of the Netherlands and said that his Government was studying what contribution it could make, within the limits of its resources, to international humanitarian efforts. The final objective must be the creation of a new, dynamic and effective international humanitarian order under United Nations auspices, dedicated to continued improvement in the quality of life of the peoples of the world.

79. **Mr. Thomson** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) expressed concern at the increase in the numbers of refugees and displaced persons and the prospect of further increases as a result of continued massive humanitarian crises. Unfortunately, the attention of the international community did not remain focused on crises long enough to ensure that assistance flows reached the most vulnerable, particularly crises in Africa and crises which did not have a high media profile. That had led to a disturbing increase in the conditionality of funding and its direction towards groups which were not always the most seriously affected.

80. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were uniquely equipped to help identify the most crucial needs by virtue of its member societies' contacts with Governments, non-governmental organizations and decision takers, on a basis of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. The Federation was UNHCR's largest single partner, working with it in numerous countries, including all countries of asylum. The growth in the number of crises and changes in attitude towards asylum seekers had increased the need for the Federation and UNHCR to work more closely together and better involve national societies in that cooperation. The Federation had also cooperated with UNHCR and non-governmental organizations in developing a refugee-protection training programme under the UNHCR "reach out" initiative.

81. The Red Cross Red Crescent worked with vulnerable individuals and groups irrespective of their status as refugees or displaced persons, and its societies, working within the law of their countries, took an active interest in the plight of internally displaced persons, a crisis of far greater proportions than that of refugees. The Federation had contributed to a number of initiatives during the past year. It was, however, concerned that actions under the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement had largely been restricted to war related displacement, and he stressed that comparable hardship and displacement were caused by natural disasters as well as the actions of certain Governments which forcibly displaced their people in order to make way for agricultural or development projects adding to strains on both the incoming and resident populations. It was precisely those situations which tended to escape media attention, and he stressed that the Federation would continue to work for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to the needs of the internally displaced.

82. The Federation's national societies also concerned themselves with the welfare and needs of migrants. Whether a person was classified as a migrant or a refugee, however, often owed more to policies in the receiving State than to the person's real circumstances. That policy confusion in some States, as well as at the international level, could have serious effects on the persons concerned. In addition, Governments in many developed countries were trying to restrict immigration while seeking to recruit talented people to fill gaps in their country's own economic "mix"; restrictions had led to a sharp rise in criminality and people-smuggling, while the search for talent had caused developing countries to lose some of their most promising individuals. National societies were often active at the heart of that conundrum, for it produced problems of vulnerability in both the countries of emigration and the countries of immigration.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*